# THE WHITE DEVIL'S MATE

LEWIS · STANTON · PALEN

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BY

LEWIS STANTON PALEN

*Author of 'The White Devil of the Black Sea'*

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# FOREWORD

WHEN a man goes out to fight, it is one thing; but when he takes his wife with him, that is quite another. And if it happen that his wife accompany him because it is safer by his side than in any place they may have previously called home; and if it also happen that his wife be a member of that class of society, designated the nobility, which a horde of society-levelers throughout the land are striving to pull down from its heights of wealth and culture, whatever these may chance to be, then we have all the elements for a stirring drama with heavy buskin rôles, if only the leading lady play her part.

From some who have followed the White Devil's wild career of hunting Bolsheviks and being hunted by them, there have come to me expressions of something more than interest in the experiences and character of his wife, coupled with sincere requests that her version of their story might be given out. In the same breath that cites these expressions as a justifying reason for helping her to produce her manuscript, I would urge, however, that her chronicle is its own ample justification.

It may, in this connection, be legitimate to give to the reader a glimpse of the way in which the case for presenting her story was summed up to the White Devil himself and agreed to by him with becoming appreciation of the 'relevancy' of the argument. It took the form of that anecdote of the Pilgrim Society which vouches for the fact that, at one of their annual dinners, some lover of

justice followed the drinking of the toast to the Pilgrim Fathers with the very insistent proposal that another and deeper draft be pledged to the Pilgrim Mothers, 'who not only had to endure all the hardships the Pilgrim Fathers went through, but had to stand the Pilgrim Fathers as well.'

Moreover, in fairness to them both, it should be a matter of record that each of them has expressed not only unquestionable doubt but very definite fear that their experiences would not be of sufficient interest to others to warrant the time and expense given to relating them. In fact, when I met them in Paris, after we had finished 'The White Devil of the Black Sea,' and I was on my way to America to present it to the publishers, the White Devil's wife, apologizing for the question and the spirit of almost discouragement behind it, asked me if I *really* thought that the public would be interested in all these details of their own personal lives. She went further and expressed her own grave doubts about it.

When one of my intimate friends in America, a woman of wide experience and fine judgment, sent me, after reading the husband's story, a very substantial gift for his wife as a simple and direct expression of one woman's admiration for another, the White Devil wrote in acknowledgment:

'The letter of Mrs. —— made a great impression on us both, especially on my wife. She could not get over it and kept on repeating she did only what every Russian woman in her place should have done, and what, as a matter of fact, many of them did. As they could not themselves fight, it was their duty to help their husbands morally.'

Such a quality in her character and the further small

but very illuminating fact that she wrote me, as her manuscript was being finished, that she had not even shown it to her mother, should help the reader, whenever he comes upon a passage that seems to exploit somewhat boldly her actions at the time, to realize the extraordinary character of the events in which this woman participated. And it must be remembered, too, that she wrote almost under protest, and was put in a position, by her acceptance of the task, of having to describe events which I have never heard her mention in conversation and which her more than fair degree of modesty would probably have kept indefinitely locked in that strong-room of her memory which contains the records of those terrible years.

It is with a sense of unhesitating confidence that I leave the reader to judge whether this *tragédienne* has acted her lines fairly or no; yet I am not so sure that those who read will see through to the soul that has animated her interpretation of the part and will be able to say whether she has been playing the rôle of humorist or saint.

LEWIS STANTON PALEN

JUAN-LES-PINS, FRANCE

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# THE WHITE DEVIL'S MATE

## CHAPTER I

### RIDING TO WOLFHOUNDS — AND WOLVES

Often in the evening, when the children are asleep and everything is quiet, a feeling of doubt and incredulity creeps in to steal the waking hours that are left to me. Is all that happened during the last few years really true, or is it not, perhaps, simply a harrowing dream, and may it not be that I shall awake to find myself once more back in the well-known surroundings of the previous happy life?

During these moments there pass before me pictures of all my unusual experiences throughout these years; and, just as was the case when many of the most trying incidents were being enacted, I feel hot and cold all over, with the sensations even more poignantly acute, for now I understand and realize it all clearly, whereas then we had only time and strength enough to live and I instinctively guarded myself from thinking or pondering over what was happening in order not to wind up further my already tense nerves.

I know that foreigners sometimes refuse to give credence to the stories we Russians tell of our experiences during the Revolution. In a way we cannot take exception to this, for they were never in the position of hunted beasts and have not had their imaginations trained to the unusual task of picturing what it feels like.

I was eighteen years old when I first met Serge M——, who was later to be my husband. It was after my initial winter in society that I left St. Petersburg in May for our country place near Moscow, and from there went for a visit of a few days with my sister, who was living on her estate in the Government of Tula. When I arrived late in the evening with my French governess, my sister took me at once to the room that was prepared for me and, as she dropped down on the sofa, uttered as almost her first words to me:

'I wanted to warn you that Serge M——is living with us at present. He is greatly run down and very nervous after some trying personal difficulties, during which he grew quite away from the close intimacy that has always existed between us. Please do not take any notice of him. He has become very shy and is afraid of every new person he sees.'

Without giving her words more than a passing thought, I soon dismissed them from my mind, as I was still full of a débutante's impressions and dreams after the first season of dances and balls.

Poor Serge was evidently much put out by my arrival, a fact which he showed the next morning by disappearing right after breakfast for social hibernation until luncheon-time, when he made his entrance into the dining-room behind my brother-in-law's broad, protecting back. But toward evening we had already found many tastes in common, especially mutual interest in horses, dogs, hunting, and all our country sports. By the following day we had progressed to the point where he took my photograph. On the third morning I reciprocated, when he climbed up and stood on one foot on the

chimney of the house, a pose which was quite unnecessary for art's sake and served only to bring forth horrified screams from my governess.

That was in the summer of 1913, and from those days there grew up between us a true and lasting friendship. During the same autumn we were hunting as usual at my sister's estate. I was myself not a good shot, partly owing to my near-sightedness and partly to my uncontrollable nervousness at the sight of game. I could never wait long enough before firing and rarely brought down my target. Consequently, I was not very fond of shooting.

What especially drew us together that autumn was the hunting with wolfhounds. My brother-in-law had a very good pack and was intensely keen in this sport. Serge was always to be found somewhere in my neighborhood on these hunts, on account of my really reckless riding, so that I was enjoying myself to the full of a wild nature, unleashed on the plains and being accorded the attention of a still wilder one.

One of these hunts stands out as especially vivid in the Gobelin of my memory. That day, as was usual before every chase, I woke with the feeling that I was late. The room was not yet even gray in the morning dawn, for it was only five o'clock. All the house was still except for the footsteps and hushed conversation of the servants, who were evidently busy in the dining-room. I did not want to sleep any more. In fact, I was quite too excited to do so, for a wolf-hunt had been planned for that day. Seven of the beasts had been tracked into a wood about five versts from the house. I had never before participated in a hunt for this bigger quarry, and the stories of them the previous evening had filled the night with dreams for

me. We were to start out at six o'clock; but I had no more patience, and so jumped up to dress, so excited that I could hardly fasten the hooks and buttons of my habit.

In the weird lamplight of the dining-room the sleepy butler and footman were mechanically preparing for breakfast. As I stepped out on the balcony in that sharp autumn cold that comes before the sunrise, the pure air, full of the smell of fallen leaves, was like perfume to my nostrils, while from across the park the voices of the grooms in the stables and the pawing and whinnying of the horses entered as wine into my blood, and I already felt the body of my hunter taking the jumps in the field.

When I reëntered the house after half an hour of thus watching for the morning to come, all had changed. Everybody was hastily drinking coffee, while in the hall the servants were busy preparing our supplies, as my brother-in-law gave them his final directions.

At last, at about six o'clock, we mounted and started off for the farm where the hounds were kept. The morning was beautiful — a bright blue sky, a sharp, biting air, and all the fields covered with a thick, white frost, which was beginning to lose its brilliance under the first rays of the rising sun. When we arrived at the kennels, we all dismounted, and my brother-in-law began to distribute the hounds among us. Both my sisters refused to take a pair, but I accepted two great, strong creatures rather than be taunted by my hunting companions. I must confess I was a bit nervous, as these two hounds had broken away from me the previous day and worried a small, miserable dog when we were returning from an unsuccessful fox-hunt. Such an occurrence among hunters was held to be a crime. My brother-in-law, who was still chagrined over the poor

fortune of our last ride, gave me no encouragement, while the old keeper who had charge of the hounds politely but sarcastically remarked: 'A lucky hunt to you, my lady.' Something in his voice made me feel he had not forgotten my maladroitness of the day before.

Stung by their apparent lack of confidence in me, I made up my mind to live down this accident, and, having mounted, firmly grasped the loop of the leash and passed it over my shoulder, while one of the young keepers was drawing the other end through the big steel rings on the hounds' collars.

We took the field once more and trotted leisurely toward the wood, where the men with guns, the beaters, and a pack of dogs to help draw the brush were awaiting us. We were all posted on our stands, and the hunt began. At first from a distance, then closer and closer, came down upon us in due course the sound of the beaters' voices, a sound which no one who has ever heard it can possibly forget so long as memory remains. It was measured and tempered at first, but then suddenly the staccato of a single beater sent the whole line into a wild, frenzied shout that joined with the baying of the hounds to tell us that the quarry was near.

I felt a nervous chill of excitement taking possession of me, and, forgetting everything else, riveted my attention on the section of the field assigned to me. I thought I saw a movement in the bushes to the left on the side toward my brother-in-law, but was afraid that I might be mistaken and said nothing. As I watched, I saw him rise in his stirrups, make a forward movement, and, driving his horse into a gallop, set his hounds free, shouting at them, as he did so, in a wild, half-savage voice. My own pair

lunged and started toward him with such a powerful bound that I just missed being dragged from my saddle; but I managed to hold them back and keep my post, as he signaled me not to follow. At first I could not clearly make out what he was chasing, but soon noticed something large and gray bounding just ahead of the wolfhounds, which I had at first taken to be one of them. Slowly they were closing the short gap between them and the animal, which was running with incredible speed and terror toward the birch wood on the other side of the open ground.

With my own hounds tugging at their leash and with my heart pounding with excitement, I had swung round quite away from the wood and the beaters to watch my brother-in-law galloping away at full speed and encouraging the pair with his shouts. At last one of his old, trained hounds drew up close to the wolf, made an extraordinary leap, and buried his teeth in the animal's neck. Without apparently slackening his speed, the wolf only turned his head and flashed his teeth, and the hound, with a howl, rolled on his side with a badly torn ear. The other made a similar attempt, but the result was the same; and the wolf never stopped. Then began a senseless chase, for the hounds dared not tackle the huge beast again and could only follow him until he was lost to sight in the wood, from where my brother-in-law rode disappointedly back to his stand.

Just at this moment some shots rang out, a wolf was killed, and a third one broke out into the open between me and my neighbor on the opposite side. We all unleashed our hounds, and in about five minutes the beast was lying under the mass of his pursuers that had borne

him down. It was decided not to kill the wolf, so the men forced a stick in between his teeth and tied him up. Every one had dismounted and stood either examining the beast or trying to snatch the hounds away from their prey, completely oblivious to everything else. I alone happened to be in the saddle, having managed to get my pair back on the leash before the others.

Casually looking around, I saw far down the field a gray figure slinking off at a rapid pace. I remember everything from this moment on as though it were all unreal, but stamped upon my mind as a vivid dream. They told me later that I began to shout frantically, 'A wolf! A wolf!' turned my horse in his tracks, ran over a hound that failed to get out of our way, and galloped off, dragging my pair after me. Seeing this, the remaining hounds that were still free instinctively joined us. At first they did not see the wolf and were running at random. Then I felt the leash tighten in my hand and remember vividly that, looking down, I saw the bristling hair, the set ears, and the tense bodies of my two beautiful animals, who had spied the fleeing quarry.

I threw the leash and urged on my horse, as I had the feeling that he was not going at all. I can still see the almost fluid movement of the hounds as they sensed their freedom and, one after another forging ahead of me, with straining muscles flattened themselves close to the ground in wild impatience and lust.

I had no time to look round, as it was my task to see that the wolf did not escape. The thought never came to me that I was alone, with all the others busy catching their horses, which were scattered over the field, and that I was powerless to do anything by myself when the hounds

should overhaul the beast. The wind was filling my eyes with tears from the speed my hunter was making, so that I saw only dimly my own pair ahead and remarked that others were overhauling and passing me, while I felt all the time that we were not making speed enough and that the wolf would surely get away. He knew full well what game was being played and abruptly changed his course, while still a long way ahead of us, and shot down into a ravine like a flying squirrel, only to be followed a few seconds later by the pack with my hunter at their heels. When I rode over this same ground a few days afterward, I was puzzled to know how I ever went into and out of the ravine on a horse without a tumble.

At the same wild speed we scrambled out on the other side, and then I saw clearly that the wolf could not escape, as there were about fifteen hounds closing in on him from all directions. I gradually came back to a full understanding of what was happening and looked around. About a hundred yards behind me a young keeper was rapidly coming up, holding his great hunting-knife all ready to strike, while farther back all the rest of the field were following at full gallop.

As I looked forward again, the pack was closing in round the wolf and I was upon them. Suddenly all the thrill left me and I was disgusted with the sight, viewing it with repulsion and turning away my horse. The wolf freed himself for a moment, sat back on his haunches, gave a snarl and a leap, knocked down several hounds, and broke away once more across the field; but it was clear that he was tired out. The pack soon ran him down again and fought him to the ground, so that hounds and wolf became one tangled heap, out of which from time to time

one of the former was catapulted forth with a torn muzzle or a bloody back. I had hardly had time to observe all this carnage when the young keeper dashed past me, riding with his feet out of the stirrups, ready to leap. He screamed savagely, raised himself in the saddle, and fell right in the midst of the snarling beasts. His well-trained horse sprang aside and stopped dead. I never understood why the man was not torn to pieces; but the next moment the hounds let go the animal, the knife flashed, and the wolf lay with his throat opened, while the keeper sat astride his back, holding him by the ears.

The hunt was over. Three wolves out of seven were killed, the remaining ones having made good their escape into the neighboring woods. The hounds were so tired and torn that it was impossible to think of further pursuit, and we consequently turned back home.

## CHAPTER II

### OUT OF A BYGONE AGE

My first season in society, the winter of 1912 to 1913, had been a very short one for me, as we were just out of mourning for my father, and my mother had decided that I should not go through the whole season, but should only be allowed to attend three or four balls at the end of the winter. This year was quite an exceptional one in our Russian capital, for it was the three-hundredth anniversary of the accession of the Romanoffs to the throne of all the Russias and was to be marked by a series of brilliant ceremonies at court and in court society circles.

When my mother asked for an audience with both the Empress and the Empress Dowager to present me to their Majesties, as was the custom for our young girls just going into society, she was informed that, owing to the illness of the Empress Alexandra, the presentations were to be made to the Empress Dowager alone at the *baise-main* ceremony. This deserves a passing word of explanation, owing to the fact that it was not the usual form of audience and actually occurred only twice during the reign of Nicholas II — the first at the time of his coronation in 1896 and the second as a congratulatory ceremony at this period of the Romanoff tricentennial anniversary. I cannot remember exactly when it happened, more than that it was sometime in January or February, but I know that this was my first appearance in the world of society and that I was certainly much more

thrilled by it than the débutantes who had already attended court and other lesser functions.

For me the excitement really began with endless visits to the dressmaker, a Frenchwoman who was a noted specialist in court costuming. My mother's dress was of dark-blue velvet with a broad band of lovely sable around her shoulders and reaching to the ground, where it bordered the train that swept out for nearly two yards behind her. The white satin panel that formed the front of the gown was closely embroidered with a fine old pattern done in small pearls, as was also the blue *kokoshnik* she wore on her head. My own gown was made from a heavy quality of *lamé* silk, bordered with little white roses and embroidered down the front panel with a design in silver.

At last the day of the ceremony came. We had to be at the Winter Palace two hours before the arrival of the Dowager Empress, as there were between two and three thousand ladies and débutantes who were to be presented and everything had consequently to be carefully planned in advance. While following mother up the grand and impressive staircase, lined with footmen in red-and-gold, I had the feeling that I should enjoy it all immensely, and my mind was rebelliously refusing to be leashed by the formal seriousness of the occasion and was searching round with the full intent of nosing out all the humor that lay hidden beneath the coverings of gold and grandeur. It was just at this moment that I discovered, standing there at the entrance of the big reception-room in his white parade uniform of the Chevalier Guards, one of my dancing partners with whom I always had a great deal of rollicking fun. He was the type of man who is ready to

laugh at everything and on all occasions; yet there he stood on guard as motionless as a statue, looking straight in front of him with an expression of stone on his usually comical face.

Forgetting for the moment all the solemnity of the occasion and lapsing into our usual state of mind at meeting, I made him a grimace as I slipped past him. I saw him begin to shake with suppressed laughter, though his face never betrayed him and he stood looking straight into the eyes of the sentinel opposite on the other side of the doorway. When next we met in our usual surroundings, he took me sharply to task for what I had made him go through, though I defended myself with the plea that it was but the whim of a moment and that soldiers must always be prepared for the unexpected.

As we passed on into the enormous white-marble Nicholas ballroom of the Winter Palace, the sun, with a brightness unusual for this season in St. Petersburg, streamed in through the great windows and bathed everything in an effulgence that lent added brilliance to the gold-embroidered uniforms of the men and to the bright court dresses of the women, lighting, as it were, myriads of fires in the masses of diamonds and other precious stones that graced a thousand heads and throats.

The master of ceremonies and his aids were busy assigning us all to our proper places. Although hundreds were thus finding their stations and the maids of honor of both the empresses and of the grand duchesses were forming themselves into groups to head the lines, there was practically no noise or sense of hurry throughout the whole of the enormous room, and a solemnity that rendered the people quite different from what they were in normal life

overspread and dominated it all. I felt that my tendency to levity had disappeared and had given place to the mustering of my powers of dignity and to the immediate task of carrying my mother's train, as our endless lines converged slowly upon the entrance to the drawing-room where the Empress was receiving the obeisances of the leading women of the land to the imperial family.

The ceremony had been initiated by the maids of honor first approaching to kiss the hand of the Empress, the senior ones in the lead, followed by the younger women. All of them were gowned in bright-red gold-embroidered dresses, the court color of both the empresses. After them came the maids of honor of the grand duchesses, one group in green-and-gold, another in pink, and a third in blue, each group according to the established color of the grand duchess whose *entourage* they helped to form. The lines were so vivid, and the gems which were matched to the costumes gave off such a brilliance that, though I do not remember many among those faces, I shall never forget that wonderful blaze of color and light, the glamour and romance of it all.

As we approached the point where we were to advance from the line and go forward alone, one of the aides to the master of ceremonies came up to me, took from my hands the train of my mother's dress and carefully spread it on the floor, while another of these aides was doing the same for me. It happened that mother's train was so heavy with the weight of the fur that a little delay was caused in arranging it properly and that we were consequently somewhat flurried at having broken the rhythm of the line of presentations.

As we approached, I could see the Dowager Empress

standing in the middle of the room in her ceremonial court dress with her two eldest granddaughters, the Grand Duchesses Olga and Tatiana, and some of the other grand duchesses beside her, while the maids of honor and the officials of the court in all the regalia of their parade uniforms filled the room behind her with a mass of brilliance and color.

At this moment I was seized by the thought that it were a thousand times better to be sitting calmly and comfortably at home — but mother was advancing, and I had no option but to follow. A first curtsy had to be made as one entered the room, and a second five or six steps farther on while kissing the Empress's hand. I made the first without difficulty, and then — I remembered! All that morning I had been practicing the obeisance, first with my old nurse representing the Empress and later, while dressing, before my French governess, who was fixing my gown and giving the final touches to it and who found my genuflections very distracting. As it was really a difficult movement, with one knee so low that it nearly touched the floor, these unusual gymnastics which I had been performing all the morning nearly proved my undoing; for, when I had to move on after the first curtsy to approach the Empress, my knees were so shaky that I felt sure I should never be able to perform the second. Immediately I began picturing all the terrible things that could happen to me: how disgraceful and unbearable it would be to sit down on the floor in front of the Empress, how everybody would stare at me, and how they would never cease laughing over my awkwardness.

Deeply sunk in these gloomy thoughts, I moved on mechanically behind mother. Then I saw her making her

curtsy, kissing the Empress's hand, and slowly retiring to the left toward the exit from the room. It was my turn, but my head was throbbing with the thought that they would all soon be laughing at me. The next I remembered I was walking out of the room, realizing that the trying ordeal was over and that I had gone through it without mishap. My mother told me later that I had curtsied in quite the proper manner, though I could recall nothing except the smiling face and the kindly eyes of the Empress looking into mine. I wondered if she knew what the feelings of a young girl on such an occasion might be!

Just before the court ceremony my mother had received a letter from the Marshal of the Moscow Nobles inviting her to come to the great ball which they were giving to the Emperor that year and to attend as one of the official representatives of the local nobility — my father had been Marshal of the Moscow Nobles for more than ten years. Mother answered the invitation by saying that she was not quite out of mourning yet, but that she would send me in her stead. Joyfully and with much expectation I prepared for the trip and for the evening at the ball under the guidance of my sister-in-law.

I knew very few in the Moscow circle, as I was only ten years old when we went to live in St. Petersburg; but the animation of the crowd and the glamour of the assembly hall of the Dvorianskoe Sobranie, or the House of Nobles, immediately fired my enthusiasm and drove all thought of strangeness away. As we arrived, I was escorted at once into the salon, which was off the big ballroom and in which a party of ten or twelve were waiting for the imperial family. Though the ladies were in ordinary evening gowns, the men, on the other hand, were decked in the black-and-gold uniforms of the court.

It seemed as though all the flowers in Russia had been brought together for this occasion. The main entrance, the staircase, and the drawing-room were massed with the most lovely collections of plants and cut flowers, the air was heavy with their perfume, and their colors stood out so brilliantly against the white marble walls of the brightly lighted rooms that I more than once stopped and closed my eyes to etch the picture more deeply on the plates of my memory.

I began wondering what the spacious ballroom looked like, but I did not have the time to satisfy my curiosity before the arrival of the Tsar and the Tsarina was announced and all our conversation stopped abruptly. The Tsarina entered first, dressed in a light-gray silk evening gown with her wonderful pearls wound several times round her neck and falling to her knees and with a diadem to match them in her hair. She was very beautiful that evening, and I was immediately struck with the thought that she really was an empress! The Emperor in the uniform of one of the Guard Regiments, the young Grand Duchesses Olga and Tatiana, in simple white evening gowns, and the other members of the imperial family followed. Several minutes passed in presentations, after which both the Emperor and Empress talked for a little while with every one in the room, the Empress asking me why my mother had not come. I can see now in vivid clearness this small salon paneled with yellow silk and banked everywhere with roses and orchids in lavish profusion, with those two figures standing clear-cut in the middle of it, the Tsar in his picturesque uniform of red, green, and gold, and the Empress with her beautiful face and exquisite pearls.

The Emperor was to open the ball with the wife of the Marshal of the Moscow Nobles as his partner. When the strains of a Chopin polonaise, played by the military band in the ballroom, floated in to us, the salon doors were flung open and I found myself on the arm of the Grand Duke Constantine in the middle of the imperial cortège, entering thus formally upon my first great ball. The vast room looked like fairyland, as I caught sight of it when walking out of the drawing-room by the side of the enormously tall Grand Duke. Over all the walls, from the big marble columns and down from the ceiling hung garlands of flowers, while around the dais reserved for the imperial family the most rare and wonderful specimens had been heaped in solid mass to form a brilliant setting of unrivaled charm and beauty.

All the guests were ranged along the walls and, in bow and curtsy, went down like a wave at the approach of the imperial cortège. Slowly the Tsar led his partner round the whole room, acknowledging right and left the many salutations; slowly the human wave resurged again to the crest after the group had passed. Never have I felt the greatness and the splendor of it all so much as I did during that first participation as a débutante in a royal ceremony. A thrill of enthusiasm gripped my heart as the polonaise gave way to an impressive silence, during which the Tsar and Tsarina stood for a moment before their seats on the dais and surveyed the lovely scene of flowers and brilliant costumes before them. It was a fitting preparation for what followed; for, out of the gripping silence, we suddenly heard the opening chords of our national anthem, and in a second every heart and throat was pouring forth the words and music of that song which

meant so much to us. For nearly a quarter of an hour the great building rang and echoed with the tribute of thousands of voices, singing the praises of their Tsar from their whole heart and soul. O Russia, wide Russia — wide in thy nature, wide in thy love and exaltation and in thy . . . cruelty!

What would that scene have been if, following that song of triumph, prophetic vision could have been given to each and every one to read in all its significance the horoscope of the decade to come? I shrink from contemplating it and give silent thanks that, if we must suffer, we are left without the knowledge of that which is to come.

But that night no one saw aught but happiness ahead, and the ball went gayly on. The young grand duchesses, who had appeared a little shy at first, were evidently enjoying the dancing. They were just seventeen and eighteen years old, and I think it was their first big ball. But the Empress looked rather tired as the evening wore on and left with her daughters at about one o'clock, immediately after the supper.

After the imperial family withdrew, we went on dancing till a very late hour. I had met many friends, especially among those who had come over from St. Petersburg, and I began to feel as much at home as one could in the midst of such an overwhelming crowd. To my great disappointment my sister-in-law took me away at about five o'clock in the morning, in spite of the fact that I tried to persuade her it was a baby's hour to go to bed.

Such are some of the most vivid impressions which I carried away from that first winter of social life in St. Petersburg. During the next season, with its constant round of parties, balls, and entertainments, I saw much

of Serge after our first meeting at my sister's estate, and could always count on finding his watchful face in some corner, ill-hiding his feelings of antagonism toward my other dancing partners. For all of us it was the last season of this sort, for during the War, and later during the Revolution, there could be no thought of formal social functions. Was it because this was the last winter of the lost Russian life or was it because the season was actually an exceptionally brilliant one that one constantly heard the remark during the following twelvemonth that for years there had not been so much animation and such beautiful balls as in the early part of 1914?

Whatever the fact, it was a wonderful time in the life of a young girl, a period in which everything radiated happiness and charm. Even now, as I stare vacantly into my little French garden, there pass before me visions of bright lights, of endless masses of flowers, of pretty dresses, and of happy faces; and to this day, whenever I smell mimosa or violets, closing my eyes, I can hear the strains of the music and can live over again all the thrills and sensations of a young girl at her first ball.

In the middle of the winter my mother decided, however, to send me for a fortnight to the country, because she felt it quite necessary that I should relax a bit and be entirely away from all the excitements attendant upon such a round of frolic and fun. At heart I was really glad to go, for I have always loved the country at this season, with the wide stretches of snow in the fields, with the woods silvered with frost, and with a calm and stillness pervading it all which only the muffling blanket of winter can bring.

Yet, in spite of my real pleasure in exchanging the ball-

room for the vast reaches of snow, I was disturbed and anxious about my participation in the one event of the season which meant most to me, the *carrousels*, or indoor riding tourneys, of the Chevalier Guards, which were to begin within the month. From my earliest childhood horses and riding had been an intimate part of my life, and I had never missed an opportunity for indulging in this my favorite pastime. Even through the busiest weeks at the height of our winter season I always managed to have an hour in the saddle every day and continued regularly the riding lessons which I was then taking in the advanced academy.

But there was nothing to be done about my participation in the tourneys, for mother had said she wished me to go to the country, and so I went. I was back in town exactly a fortnight later and received word from the footman who met me at the station that I had been called by telephone that very morning by Count C—— of the Chevalier Guards and had been asked to communicate with him immediately upon my arrival.

An hour later, when we were talking over the telephone, he invited me to be his partner in the grand tourney of the following week at which the Dowager Empress was to be present, adding the rather disturbing information that the dress rehearsal was to be held that very evening and that it would be necessary to appear in the regulation habit of red-and-silver, which were the regimental colors.

'But I have nothing of this sort!'

'Oh, I know, but you simply must manage to get it!'

It was about ten o'clock in the morning, and I immediately rang up one of my girl friends to ask her where she had ordered her habit. Twenty minutes later I drove

up to the establishment of the English tailor whose name she had given me and presented to him the very extraordinary request for a whole riding-habit with a special hat and cockade to be ready that afternoon. Thereafter I always looked upon that tailor as a unique specimen of a man; for he never uttered a word of protest, surprise, or doubt, just charged me double the usual price, asked me to return for a fitting at three o'clock sharp, and sent the costume to me at eight, splendidly tailored and correct in every detail. When mother and I arrived an hour later at the Chevalier Guards' *manège*, my partner was frankly astounded.

The rehearsal went off very well, and exactly a week later we were gathered once more at the *manège*, but were all much more excited this time, as the Empress was momentarily expected and we should soon be performing before a large audience. We counted about fifteen couples in all and were to go through our formal drills and dances before paying our respects to the Empress. As we gathered round the horses at the stalls, I could not help remarking what a brilliant picture the costumes made. The officers were in their white parade uniforms, with cuirasses that shone like gold and similar helmets, topped with the double-headed eagle; while we girls were in our red coats with black skirts and black *tricornes* with silver cockades.

As the sound of the orchestra, playing the regimental march, reached our ears, every one stood at attention, while the officers and soldiers about the building saluted, for the Empress, the honorary commander of the regiment, had arrived. A moment later we had mounted and were advancing toward the big door that led into the arena.

'Watch your horse as we enter, for he may at first be afraid of the carpet,' my partner warned me.

I did not quite understand what he meant by 'the carpet,' but realized a second later, as the door was opened and we passed out pair by pair. The building was brilliantly illuminated and was hung on all sides with the colors of the regiment. At the farther end the tribune was filled with the principal guests, in the middle of whom I had just time to make out the figure of the Empress dressed in a dark costume. But I had only a glimpse of it all, as I was distracted and held by the fidgety uneasiness of my mount. Looking down, I immediately understood both the reason of my horse's restiveness and the meaning of my partner's warning; for the sand of the arena had been smoothed and covered by a thick layer of sawdust of various colors, green, yellow, red, and blue, representing the complicated design of an Eastern carpet. We had hardly time to pull our horses down after their initial fright at this unusual ground before the eight soldiers who rode at the head of our column broke out a fanfare of trumpets to take the place of the orchestra's music, which had now ceased.

After we had made one round of the *manège*, the column split up in alternate pairs to right and left and swung gracefully into the first figure of the quadrille which opened our programme. Then we went through all the movements of the contra-dance, or quadrille, sometimes at a walk, then at the trot, and later at full gallop, the horses being so well trained that almost without direction from their riders they followed the music through the various paces. I had been a bit nervous at the beginning about my mount, as he had broken from the line

during one of the previous tourneys, taken his head, and galloped straight for the tribune, where he swung and let fly at the planking with both his feet in such wild rebellion against all control that he had frightened the honored guests and chagrined beyond recovery the poor girl who was riding him. She was a horsewoman of limited experience and could do nothing to curb her steed until one of the officers came to her rescue.

But this time all went well, and in an hour the drill was over. Then we rode up to the tribune, pair by pair, dismounted, and were formally presented to the Empress. She stayed for some time after this and, when she departed, the games, or gymkhana events, began. But what I enjoyed most of all during the evening was the wonderful soldiers' chorus, singing the Russian folk-songs, that music which follows us and haunts us wherever we go, and which can never, for us Russians, be equaled or replaced.

## CHAPTER III

### A NURSE AND A WOUNDED OFFICER

After this last winter in St. Petersburg, so filled with gayety and thrills, we once more returned with the summer to our estate near Moscow. Up to the very day before our departure we were all as in a dream, and the declaration of war found us quite unprepared. None of us could believe in the possibility of its lasting; we even continued to make plans for hunting in the autumn, for everybody spoke of certain victory in two or three months.

In Moscow the patriotic enthusiasm was high, especially when the Emperor arrived there. I went with my mother to the reception at the palace and to the special service in the Uspensky Cathedral. An enormous crowd of people stood in the Kremlin and around the Krasnoye Kryltso (the grand staircase of the big palace), down which came the Emperor, followed by all the imperial family, on his way to the cathedral. My head fairly ached from the shouts of enthusiasm with which the people welcomed our Tsar, and for a long time after my ears rang with them.

But during the following days began that nightmare of the men going to the front, including many peasants from our own villages. The stories that came from every side about the tragic partings depressed us and made our spirits very low. The time came when we had to say good-bye to my brother, and to Serge as well, who happened to be with us when his orders arrived and who was going direct to the front. The day preceding their

departure we had prayers in our church for all those who were leaving. Never before had I seen such a crowd there, with the possible exception of a few great holidays. Some of the peasant women began to cry and moan, as they usually do over the dead; but they were immediately led out and forbidden to come back until they could control themselves. All the church was silent, and in the stillness there was something so solemn and so great that every one felt a catch in the throat, and tears fell freely without the least notice being taken of them.

There is nothing in Russia more impressive than our church services, and nowhere is seen so well the true character of the Russian people; for there the concentration, thoughtfulness, and calmness of the praying crowd is as great as the life itself in Russia, with the immeasurable woods, the giant rivers, and the steppes, where one can ride for hundreds and hundreds of versts without ever meeting a soul. Involuntarily one becomes part of this bigness; it invades one with its strength, gives one the power of concentration, and develops one's imagination. Through all my life I have felt the influence of it, and how I do miss it now!

In August of 1914 I enrolled as a nurse in a hospital, as the work in the Red Cross *ouvroirs*, sewing garments or rolling bandages, seemed much too quiet an occupation for me. My mother consented, although I knew she did not in her innermost heart like the idea.

There were nearly a score of nurses, among whom the youngest, one of my cousins, was only sixteen. We started off with such enthusiasm and careless disregard of our energy that by the end of two months only a few of us could continue at our tasks, while the others were

exhausted. But during this time we learned a great deal, especially to be calm in the most trying moments and not to show our feelings.

I continued this hospital work about a year, during which time I had scarcely any news of Serge. He once came back to recover from a wound, after he had been promoted to officer's rank and had received the Saint George's Cross. I hardly saw him during that visit to Moscow, but in the summer of 1915 we began writing to each other. At this time he was in Kieff recuperating from his second wound, with several broken ribs and a perforated lung.

In the early days of August, Moscow was overflowing with refugees from Poland. Thousands and thousands of them covered the floors of the railway stations or sat themselves down in the streets under the open sky. Sufficient quarters could not possibly be secured in such a short time for the hordes that arrived every day.

My mother, having remarked that I was overtired from my hospital duties, proposed to me that I change to relief work among these refugees. When I accepted her suggestion and went, with one of my cousins, to offer our services to the committee, they immediately enrolled us and assigned us one of the largest regions of refugees in the city, leaving us to organize it in whatever manner we chose. The committee promised us all the funds we might need and stipulated only the one condition, that we should accept and care for on the morrow about eighteen hundred refugees — and then began something at the mere thought of which my head still swims.

From seven in the morning — for I had a six-mile ride up to town — I ran about the whole day with my cousin

from one place to another. We had to lease houses and organize food supplies and distribution stations, a school for the children, etc.; while the refugees kept coming and coming in streams of which we never seemed to see the end. During the first week our charges counted more than eight thousand. They were a dreadful sight, dirty, tattered, and exhausted, looking like wild animals. Nearly all the children were ill — scarlet fever, diphtheria, and measles were never absent; while among the grown-ups we had to face frequent cases of cholera and smallpox. With all the hospitals in Moscow so full that it was useless to think of sending patients to them, it was necessary to open our own establishment. Faced by the rather fundamental difficulty of being unable to find a real doctor, as the greater part of the doctors were at the front and those that were left in Moscow were buried in work, the committee proposed that we choose between a dentist and a veterinary surgeon, who were the only two prospects offering. We decided to enlist the former and were very pleased with him. It would hardly have been possible for any one to work more conscientiously than he did. Naturally, however, with our inexperience, we could not help making a few unfortunate blunders, but no one could have accused us of having a useless institution.

One morning, on entering a newly opened barracks where some four or five hundred men, women, and children had arrived during the night, I was met and shocked by a terrible uproar. Everybody was shouting, grown-ups and children alike, but louder than all the rest were the furious yells of a woman lying in the corner on a mattress and apparently in hysterics. I could not

make out what the trouble was, as all the refugees spoke only Polish, of which I understood only a few words, and the interpreter, who always seemed to disappear when he was most needed, was not there. Hysterical cases turned up often among the refugees, but I generally succeeded in quieting them rather promptly. Consequently, I came up to the woman around whom the crowd had gathered and began to stroke her forehead. At first I spoke kindly to her, but, seeing she did not heed me, I grew cross and sternly repeated to her one of the few Polish words I knew:

'Be quiet!'

The others round us subsided for a moment, only to begin to shout once more. Then I turned on them and ordered them also to be silent. They obeyed and made no further demonstration for quite a time, until one of them ventured to pull my sleeve and make some explanation, the only word of which I understood was 'cholera' — and it was cholera! The unfortunate woman died the next day, and I could never forgive myself for having, through my love of quiet and order, chided a dying woman and been cross with her.

On the 9th of September, 1915, early in the morning, Serge rang me up by telephone at our estate. He was staying in Moscow for a few hours on his way to the Caucasus, where he was going to take a cure after his last serious wound, and he wanted to see me before leaving.

'I am very much occupied to-day,' I answered. 'I am starting immediately for town and shall remain at the barracks until evening, so that it will hardly be possible for me to see you.'

'May I not go there?' he asked.

'If it will interest you to see the refugees, please come. But really there is hardly anything worth seeing,' I answered, having sensed from the sound of his voice that something serious was in his mind.

As soon as I reached the barracks, I told Olga that I expected a caller and begged her not to leave me alone. In answer she only laughed at me and, notwithstanding my entreaties, disappeared immediately. She was such a tease that she simply could not deprive herself of the pleasure of a joke at my expense. As she did not know Serge, she was not afraid of being recognized, and so, instead of going in and inspecting the barracks, she called the refugees outside in the street for the necessary questions and, as she explained next day, continued to watch over Serge and me.

According to her account, this is what happened. An *izvostchik* dashed up and out of it flew a very blushing officer, who began running from one building to another until he stumbled upon the one where I was at work. Shortly afterward we came out together and began walking up and down in the garden before the barracks, entirely oblivious of a shower that had just begun. We noticed it was raining, according to Olga, only when we appeared once more in the street and the officer, looking interrogatively at the clouds, helped me into the *izvostchik*, put up the hood, and drove off with me. I confess I do not remember the rain.

Olga says she came home drenched through and is still laughing over the eventful 9th of September, adding, with every recital of the occasion, a few new and interesting details. It is curious what imaginations some people have.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE WORLD REVERSED

A YEAR and a half later, on the 3d of February, 1917, we were married. We decided to go to Kieff, where we were to spend Serge's leave of six weeks, to give him a chance to recuperate from the effects of his several wounds, and then move on to the headquarters at Bukovina, to which he was attached.

I had heard much about the beauty of Kieff, but never imagined anything equal to what I actually found. The town is situated on the high right bank of the river Dnieper, which is very broad at this point. The left bank is low and is so entirely submerged by the spring overflow that one does not see the opposite shore, as the water stretches away to the horizon. The city is one of the most ancient Russian towns and was the first capital of the country, built by Prince Oleg in 882.

During the first two or three weeks we explored everything that was ancient and historic in the town, among them the Cathedral of Saint Sophia, which was built in the beginning of the eleventh century, and the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael, also visiting with special interest the Kieff-Petchersky Monastery. This latter made a very strong impression upon me. To no sacred place do the Russian pilgrims go with such fervor as to this monastery, where the relics of some of the most beloved saints, among them those of Prince Vladimir, Nestor, and Anthony, are enshrined. From all parts of the country the pilgrims, young and old alike, come trudging in after

weeks and months on the road, to remain only two or three days in the monastery to pray, to light a candle before the miraculous ikon of the Assumption of the Holy Virgin, and to worship it. This ikon hung over the entrance to the altar in the principal church of the monastery and was richly set with marvelous pearls and precious stones, the gifts of generations of wealthy people, princes, and Tsars. Once a day, at the end of the service, they lower it so that the pilgrims can approach it.

But what impressed us most at the monastery were the underground caves, or catacombs, which Serge and I went through on our first visit to the place. A monk with a lighted candle in his hand guided us. At the bottom of a short flight of steps we entered a narrow corridor, which led far away underground and carried us to small chapels and many subterranean habitations. Here in the year 1051, Saint Anthony, the founder of the first monastery after the conversion of Russia, came to live, followed in subsequent centuries by many of the country's most revered holy men. Here also the princes and the people have sought sanctuary to rest from the tumult of life, spending weeks in the caves, fasting and living the lives of hermits, to return into the world soothed and with cleansed souls.

In these caves was born the Russian religious mysticism and the strength that lies within it, as well as nearly all the Muscovite civilization. In those early days practically only the monks were able to read and write, so that our first historical sources, the 'Annals,' or 'Year-Books,' were written by them generation after generation.

We came up at last and, while Serge was talking with the monk, I sat down near an old woman pilgrim.

'Where do you come from, granny?' I asked her.

'From the Volga,' she answered. 'God has given me the happiness of being able to come and worship the saints. I have lived for three days in the caves and can now meet my last days calmly,' she added, crossing herself.

'How were you able to stay so long in the caves?'

'Simply enough. I took some bread and water with me and remained there for three days and nights. I prayed until I was tired, then went and lay down; after a while I ate some bread and returned again to worship. I have purified myself and to-day have been to Communion. Now that my vow is accomplished, I can die in peace.'

The old woman was about seventy and had come from a distance of over six hundred miles, covering the whole journey on foot, that added grace might accrue to her and make her death easy.

During these days in Kieff we were living along, carefree and happy, and were so filled with our own personal affairs that the first news of the Revolution in Petrograd came as an impossible thunderbolt for us. On the 28th of February, three weeks after our marriage, Serge and I went to dine at a hotel. The town was full of soldiers going home on leave or passing back to the front. During the previous few days we had been so busy shopping that we had not seen any one and had not even read the papers. We were consequently surprised by the tense and anxious atmosphere we found in the hotel corridor. Officers were passing in and out and were questioning one another intently. Serge went out to inquire what it was all about.

'They say that there is a military mutiny in Petrograd

with a lot of shooting. The Tsar is in Pskoff and is unable to return to Tsarskoye Selo. Nobody knows anything definite, as all communications are broken. The whole thing will certainly soon collapse, when the loyal troops are brought in to subdue the mutiny; for at present there are only young and easily disaffected recruits in the capital.'

When Serge came back to our table, I hardly recognized him. From this moment he was changed into another man. All his calm had disappeared, and one could see that his nerves were so strained that salvation lay only in feverish activity. He could not stay quiet in one place for any length of time, and his state of mind grew constantly worse.

The days that followed were a nightmare to us both. We passed hours in discussing the necessities of the situation and the critical seriousness of the events that were transpiring in Petrograd, Moscow, and Pskoff. Serge would not believe in the possibility of the Tsar's abdication, but to me it seemed that the persistent rumors, which were constantly coming in, must have some foundation in fact.

During these first days of upheaval I attempted to divert Serge, who had grown quite impossible, by inducing him to go for drives with me. But this did not help much; for, as most of the interesting historical places we could visit during these outings were churches, he spent his time lighting candles before the ikons and ordering prayers for the Tsar. If, on the other hand, we drove out into the country and I tried to change his tense chain of thought, he would accuse me of possessing revolutionary ideas — the only thing for which I could not pardon him during all these trying years.

How well I remember the morning of April 4th when the news of the abdication of the Tsar reached us! Notwithstanding all the talk of the past week and the fact that we should have been thoroughly prepared, this announcement overwhelmed us. The Tsar had abdicated for himself and the Tsarevitch, after which Grand Duke Michael, the next in line, in turn abdicated in favor of the Provisional Government.

As I hurried into the dining-room in response to his call, I knew something was quite wrong with Serge; in fact, I believe he was very near to madness that day. He was sitting, white as death, with glowing eyes and repeating:

'All is at an end. What will happen to Russia without a Tsar? Russia is finished!'

I was not able to calm him, and we passed the day scarcely speaking to each other, Serge buried deep in his thoughts and I searching for some way to extricate him from this mood. At that time I did not yet really know him well, and, never imagining what an effect this news could have upon him, quite lost my head. As darkness fell, I urged him to go with me to take supper at the house of some friends, who had invited us for the evening. He did not want to go, so that I had to use all my powers of persuasion, feeling sure that it would divert him.

Soon after arriving at the house, I realized that I had made a profound mistake, for it was a military household, where there were none but officers gathered that evening, and these exclusively strong monarchists. The topic of conversation was ever the same — the abdication of the Tsar, and the fact that all had now come to an end. Every one showed great excitement and nervousness, which re-

acted so on Serge that I felt he had reached the limit of his restraint. It seemed to me I could see in his eyes that another moment and all these conversations would end in something dreadful, that all the animal instincts were uppermost in him and that he had lost all control over himself. I felt also that my influence over him was gone; that I was in the position of a helpless child who sees the fire and understands the danger but does not know how to stop it.

I tried to take him away, but he was so obsessed by his rankling wound that he would not listen to me. At last, when it was very late, probably much past midnight, having quite lost my temper and being thoroughly exhausted by the atmosphere of irritated people, I sprang up and declared that he could do as he liked, but that I was going home. Cooled somewhat by my harshness, he followed me without any further protestation.

I shall certainly never forget that evening, for it was the first time that I had realized into what my husband's disposition, generally so even and good-humored could transform itself under the influence of revolution against the Crown. I felt twenty years older that night, because I understood the hourly responsibility which would rest upon me in the future.

This is what happened. We had just reached the principal street of Kieff, when our drosky was overtaken by a carriage containing six or seven drunken, singing, shouting soldiers. They were the first stern evidence of the change that we had encountered up to this time. They took no notice of us and drove past without straightening up or saluting at the sight of an officer. Serge grew pale with rage, for in his military soul discipline ruled with

an iron hand. He rose as though he were going to spring out of the carriage, and I hardly had time to grasp his arm before the horses, frightened by the shouts, gave a plunge and broke into a wild gallop; and, while Serge kept his head turned in the direction of the soldiers, I gave a sign to the scared driver to swing into the next side street. The men bombarded us with a volley of insults in which every second word was 'freedom.' It is easy to imagine my anxiety at the time, as the lynching of officers by the soldiers had already begun. At that moment we swung away from them around a corner to the right and tore along the more lonely streets.

We reached our apartment without further incident, but that day was the turning-point in our lives. From this time on we lived and still live, surrounded by rumors of all kinds, expecting something to happen, believing in the possibility that seemingly fantastic dreams might be realized, — I must record that many of them came to realization, — and existing always in the hope of better times ahead. Without that hope, I am sure that we should have been unable to endure all that we have been through.

## CHAPTER V

### OUR FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE BOLSHEVIKS

At the end of March we had to go to Petrograd. Serge ordered a small compartment for the two of us. As it was known that the trains were filled with soldiers who were deserting from the front, I was rather afraid of this journey because of his nervous state, and I went to his room, while he was packing the last things, to observe his mood and prepare myself for many possible eventualities. I shall never forget the feeling that came over me at this first shock of seeing him load his revolver and thrust it into his pocket!

'Serge, why do you take it?' I pleaded, almost in tears.

'It is only a precaution against the possibility of some one being rude to you,' he answered, in an attempt to calm me.

That was the last straw, for now I realized that I was the cause of his anxiety! I kept silent, put on my coat, covered myself to the eyes, and, as we arrived at the railway station, tried my best not to jostle any one in the crowd. I still remember most vividly those first anxieties, which proved so infinitesimal in comparison with our later experiences, and can still see Serge pushing aside the soldiers in front of me and constantly looking back at me with the question in his eyes:

'Is any one being uncivil toward you?'

Why he felt convinced that some one would insult me I could not appreciate at that time, for I did not yet know what he did about those soldier mobs. We arrived at our

car quite safely and locked the door of our compartment, a precaution that soon proved well warranted; for ten minutes had not passed before all the corridors and the other compartments were jammed with soldiers. Several times some one tried to force our lock, but always desisted and left us in peace in the face of Serge's stern warning:

'I shall fire at the first man who shows his head.'

We traveled thus shut in and under this strain during the thirty-six hours to Petrograd. As we had no provisions with us and were thoroughly hungry by the end of the day, Serge decided to scramble out of the window at the next big station to buy some supplies. The moment he jumped out, the soldiers, who had noticed the move, immediately swarmed into the car and began to pound again at our door. I kept silent and listened.

'Only the lady is in there. Break the door,' one of them shouted.

'He was able to climb out through the window, but he cannot get back that way and will have to unlock the door. Let's wait and get him here,' suggested another.

As a matter of fact I was wondering all the time how Serge would get back, for the window was very high up from the ground, inasmuch as our car was not opposite the raised platform in the station. In about five minutes I saw him coming, loaded with parcels, and made signs to him to be careful. He understood and approached the window by keeping close to the train, handed me the parcels, and then — to my delight and the disappointment of the soldiers — easily drew himself up and climbed in through the window. Several times afterward the soldiers threatened to force the door, but something

always kept them from doing so. We never could quite make out whether it was the vestige of discipline which still remained in them or the fear of possible punishment; nevertheless, we arrived unmolested at our destination.

We tarried only a month in Petrograd, where there were no very pronounced changes to be remarked in the streets, except that there were fewer people, hardly any officers at all, and no policemen. The absence of these last was the most striking of all. In place of them we had the so-called militia men, dressed in plain clothes and hung on all sides with hand grenades.

On our way back to Kieff we stopped for a few days in Moscow. The town was brimming with life and gave the appearance of much more activity than one saw in the Capital. Everybody was full of stories concerning the first days of the Revolution.

In Kieff also we found few changes. Life had reassumed its more or less normal course when in May I was compelled, by an acute attack of appendicitis, to remain in bed for a time.

After my recovery in July, we decided to go to the country place near Moscow belonging to my mother, where all the other members of my family were living. There in the country we did not notice any great change as a result of the Kerensky Revolution, except the very perceptible difference in the food. Meat grew very dear, so that we ate more heathcock and partridges. Also the gruels were noticeably inferior, having frequently bits of stones and sand in them. Sugar had likewise become scarce.

Gradually, however, the whole routine of life began to change. Already my mother was the only one who had a

motor-car, and this was because she was at the head of the organization of warehouses of the Nobles of Russia in aid of the wounded and had to go to Moscow every day. The car was furnished her by the organization, while the rest of us had to drive to town in carriages.

But the most obvious and significant change was in the attitude of our peasants toward us. They gave evident signs of irritation against their masters, the women and children even ceasing to bring flowers and mushrooms to sell to us. Our friendly talks and intercourse with them had also come to an end. It was only toward my mother, whom the peasants had always adored, that their bearing did not greatly change. They came to see her and to pay their respects on her arrival, just as they had always done before; and later they several times appeared in considerable numbers to discuss private and political matters with her. But I repeat that, even then, there was a change evident. For example, on Sundays in church they did not wait to let my mother first kiss the cross at the end of the service, as had always been the custom, but pushed forward demonstratively, talked loudly and showed plainly that the wonted affection and respect had disappeared. Our park, which they had previously never entered, was now freely trespassed upon. They cut down the trees and pastured their cattle right up to within a short distance of our house. All these accumulated demonstrations had a depressing effect on us. When remonstrated with, they simply put the blame on some one else, promised to have the matter stopped, and then repeated the same course the following day.

Still, we lived on peacefully that first disturbed summer, trying to take no notice of these matters we chose to

call trifles. All our old servants were typical in their attitude during this period. There still lived on our estate many who had formerly belonged to us under the law of the serfs, which was abolished in the year 1861. The psychology of these people was quite extraordinary. They believed that all their belongings were ours; and to save anything of ours they were ready to give their lives. They surrounded and protected our family during these anxious months and kept us posted as to the ideas and intentions of the neighboring populace, even assuming the lead, if one can use such an expression, in an anti-revolutionary movement. To this very day we receive from them news of all that is happening on our estates.

The first steps of the Bolsheviks, after definitely taking possession of the place, was to dismiss all the servants devoted to us, probably not liking the influence these people had over the peasants. As the greater part of them were quite old and had been born right on our lands, one can easily imagine what a dramatic moment it was to them when they were forced to quit their homes. And now they make their way on foot from Moscow out to the estate, about ten miles distant, scout all over the place at night, and then send us news of it through some channel or other.

It was at the end of October that the Bolshevik revolt in Moscow began. We could distinctly hear the cannonading and even the separate shots. Telephone communication was cut, and all access into the city stopped, so that we were crazy with anxiety about my mother, who had gone into town and was living opposite the Alexander Military School, which was being besieged by the Bolsheviks. News of what was happening in Moscow was

brought to us by the peasants who crossed the river during the night in small boats; but no one could get to the center of the town and to my mother because of the lines of Red and White guards. We could only sit and wait. We were not afraid for ourselves, because we had nothing more than robbers to fear, and against these we organized night patrols around the house.

It was uncanny to remain alone after all the others left or moved into the house adjoining and my husband and brother went away for a time. Perhaps it was rather childish of me, but my father's large, dimly lighted study, which was our bedroom, with its heavy, antique furniture and glowing coals in the fireplace, gave me a creepy feeling. I thought of all the ghost stories I had ever known, and remembered that, in our childhood, we always believed the study to be haunted, as it had been the death-chamber of our great Russian philosopher, W. Solovieff, who, because of the pensive, self-communing expression of his photograph in the study, was always a mystery to us children. Being quite unable to endure the stillness of the enormous house with its creaking, hollow echoes, I begged, to the great amusement of Serge and my brother, that my father's old coachman be made to sit in the hall near my door. It makes me ashamed now to think of my cowardice, but at the time I had not yet gone through the training which I have since had.

One fine day, when we were sitting reading in our room, Serge remarked: 'And here come the Bolsheviks!'

I must confess that I have the habit — evidently a very disagreeable one, as everybody, even my two-year-old daughter, is always cross with me over it — of hearing absolutely nothing when I am reading.

'Yes,' I murmured, without realizing what he had said.

'Please stay where you are. I will come back directly.'

'Certainly,' I answered, and a cross idea came into my mind. 'Why is he disturbing me by saying such silly things while I am reading? I was not thinking about going anywhere!'

I do not know how much time passed before a shot under the window and the appearance at the same moment of Serge's orderly with a grave face brought me back from my book to the realities of the world around me.

'What is the matter, Soboleff?'

'The Bolsheviks have come and have surrounded the house.'

'Where is Mr. Serge?' I demanded, springing up.

'He is speaking with them, and the Princess is there also. Neither of the Princes is at home, but I believe some one has gone to find and inform them.'

I ran to the window. In front of the house stood a group of armed men surrounding Serge and my sister-in-law. Just at that moment Serge bent down to pick up his matches, and one of the Bolsheviks noticed the revolver which was always hidden under my husband's tunic. I could see that he was saying something, but naturally I could hear nothing. Then began an animated discussion, which resulted in Serge giving up his revolver and receiving a receipt for it.

'We must hide things, if you don't want them to be stolen,' I heard the voice of the orderly behind me; 'for they will surely search the house.'

In a few seconds we had concealed all that was of value on my tables in the secret drawers of the old

sofas; and, just as I was preparing to go to join Serge, something so funny happened that even the disciplined orderly was unable to keep from laughing.

In rushed my maid, Dunia, who had been my childhood nurse. Many a time during these past years has she saved us. Her devotion toward us is immeasurable, and I certainly have as much, sometimes even more, confidence in her judgment than I have in my own; yet she always amuses me hugely by her primitive and impulsive character.

'They are killed!' she screamed, almost in hysterics.

'Who has been killed?' we both cried, thinking of my brothers.

'Well, if they are not yet killed, they will be! You will be killed, and Prince Nicholas and everybody!'

'What nonsense you are talking! Stop instantly!' I said sternly.

'They are killed, killed!' she continued, to the great amusement of the orderly; 'they have stolen everything, or will steal it — there is no difference in that!'

These cries were particularly inappropriate at that time. Already a few of the Bolsheviks, attracted by the noise, had peeped in through the windows and might enter the house at any moment. Suddenly I had a bright idea. I quickly took off my pearls and earrings, tied them up in my handkerchief and thrust them all inside Dunia's blouse, taking her by surprise and ordering her in a whisper:

'Get out of the house this instant! Go to the village and stay there until the Bolsheviks have left. If they do steal everything else, at least these will be safe.'

One must, in justice to Dunia, record that she is not at

all stupid and that, like most peasant women, she can instantly change from hysteria to perfect calm. She immediately realized that I was right, winked at me, and, assuring me that no one would ever find the jewels about her, rolled like a ball out of the room.

She passed the next two hours drinking tea and gossiping with her friend, to whose child she was godmother, and never gave her the slightest inkling of the presence of the Bolsheviks. Although the village is only five minutes' walk from our house, everything had happened so quietly that the peasants did not know of the raid. The search came to an end much more happily than we had dared to hope.

In a few days we were able to move into Moscow. It was not without reason that we had been anxious about my mother. Her house stood right in the line of fire from both sides; one shell had blown away the balcony and another had torn off a corner of the building. Several bullets spotted the walls of the rooms, while not a pane of glass in the whole apartment remained unbroken and two of the household were seriously wounded. Fortunately, my mother and aunts were unharmed and in very good spirits, extraordinary as it may seem.

## CHAPTER VI

### UNDER THE URALS

As the state of affairs was becoming worse and worse every day with reference to questions of food and general order, Serge and I decided to go to Orenburg, near which the estate of my husband's family was located. We were joined by my mother-in-law, my two sisters-in-law, and the husband of one of them. Our journey was so typical of those times that I must describe it briefly.

There were ten of us, including the servants. Our tickets and seats had been booked about three days beforehand in the through train to Orenburg. On the appointed day we left the house, having with difficulty found droskies, which had almost disappeared from the streets of Moscow, and a wagon for our voluminous luggage.

We arrived at the station, sat there about four hours, and, although Serge and his brother-in-law did their utmost to secure our places, had to give up and return home. The whole train was filled with soldiers, by some of whom our seats had been taken in the early morning, and the authorities were unable to turn the men out.

The following morning we decided to try to make the station as early as possible and so set out about five hours before train time. As we were unable to find any droskies this second day, my mother-in-law perched on top of the trunks in the wagon, while the rest of us trudged behind on foot. With this order of march, we ran right into the solemn funeral procession of the Bolshevik victims of the

October rising. We really had no luck! My mother-in-law from her point of vantage was making loud comments on the subject of the crowd, to which Serge replied in worse than kind. Thus we continued our journey, walking on the edge of a volcano, till at last we turned into a deserted street.

This time we were able to secure seats, but only two compartments of two berths each for the ten of us. All went well until we reached Samara, though the train was making only about a quarter of its usual speed, as the soldiers ordered it to stop at every small station while they drank their tea, which they always did in the most leisurely manner. We arranged ourselves more or less comfortably, sitting on our bags on the floor of one compartment, as we had given the other to the four servants with the heavy luggage, and the berths in ours to my mother-in-law and to Serge's oldest sister, who did not feel well.

At Samara the trouble began. A crowd of soldiers and one sailor, who was just an overgrown boy, jammed the corridor and all the other compartments. The sailor began to shout:

'Off with the civilians and women; throw them out of the windows! Don't wait; throw them out while the train is moving!'

My mother-in-law, like some of her generation, was not yet able to readjust herself to the requirements of the new order of things and, hearing these words of disrespect, answered very sharply, upbraiding the sailor for rudeness toward women and saying that such a thing could not have happened during the Tsar's reign. One could hardly imagine a statement more unfortunate or more calculated

to fire them into action. It certainly froze us in expectation of what might happen.

'Comrade, come into our compartment and let us talk the matter over,' Serge's cool voice suddenly spoke behind me; and, to our great astonishment, this most fiery antagonist of the Bolsheviks let the sailor in, shut the door behind him, and invited him to take a seat on one of our bags. He told me later that he felt just as a suicide must feel, as he raises the hammer of his revolver — one moment, and all may be over!

In my opinion it was a miracle that Serge was able to keep himself and my mother-in-law in hand at such a crisis. It turned out that everything soon became easier, as the sailor guarded our compartment against his comrades, went to fetch our provisions at the station — always through the window, although the door was opposite our compartment — related to us most extraordinary anecdotes, and even tried to flirt with Ina, my youngest sister-in-law, who laughed at him quite disgracefully. At an irregular stop between two stations, four soldiers climbed into our compartment, where we were already seven, and immediately proceeded to go to sleep, one of them arranging himself quite comfortably in my mother-in-law's lap. She abused him terribly and tried to push him off, but he heard or heeded nothing until he was awakened by his companions and scrambled down after them.

The first three or four weeks in Orenburg were extremely agreeable. Serge showed us everything that was worth seeing — the big bazaar with its Oriental wares, beautiful Persian rugs, Bokhara textiles, and dried fruit from Turkestan, which were brought across the steppes by

camel caravans. Another visit was to the horse fair, where all the Bashkir horses were sold in droves. These, by the way, are quite remarkable animals, most of them a *café au lait* color with a black stripe along the spine, as small as ponies, having a long and thick coat and making in general a very strange impression. Their tails, which are extremely heavy, sweep the ground, while their forelocks, through which burn small, wild eyes, join with their manes to cover the entire head. They are certainly a very ugly-looking breed, but, on the other hand, they are extremely clever, swift and light in their movements, and endowed with a strength that seems inexhaustible. The Bashkirs have a quaint way of marking them, in that they bite off a piece of an ear, a means of identification that takes the place of the ordinary brand of our horse-breeders.

While examining these animals of the steppes, we noticed a very strange-looking carriage with a beautiful, well-groomed horse in the shafts. In the drosky sat a Tartar with the face of a rogue and dressed in a sheepskin coat and fur cap.

'Good-day, brother Serge,' he called to my husband, touching his hand to his brow and his heart.

'Ah, good-day, Abtrei,' answered my husband with evident delight. 'It is Abtrei, our relative,' Serge explained to me. 'You remember I told you that one of our ancestors was a Tartar.'

I turned and bowed to this new, unexpected kinsman. Abtrei, true Mohammedan that he was, looked at me with disdain, as I was only a woman and women are to them little more than hard-working domestic animals.

'From which stable did you get your cow?' he asked Serge, which is the Tartar way of inquiring the name of the family from which a wife comes.

Serge replied by giving my maiden name, not forgetting my title. Abtrei's face instantly took on another expression. He climbed out of his carriage, put his hand to his brow and his heart, bowed to the earth before me and said:

'My salutations, sister. Come to see me; you will honor me by doing so.'

Ina and I with difficulty refrained from laughter, yet I answered him with a serious face:

'You are doing me an honor by inviting me; I shall certainly come with my husband and my sister.'

He was one of the richest Tartars of Orenburg and a well-known horse-dealer, buying and selling annually many thousands of horses; yet, in spite of this, his private life was that of the ordinary Tartar. The only luxuries he allowed himself were seven wives and magnificent carriage horses which, though of the Bashkir breed, cost two or three thousand roubles apiece and sometimes even more.

The day we went to visit him, he came to meet us in the hall of his small but remarkably clean house.

'You must do as the law prescribes, sister,' he said, before any formal greeting to me, and offered me a dish of cold, greasy pancakes.

I took one and, tearing off a small piece, ate it.

'And now I greet you, sister,' continued our cousin, giving me his hand.

Ina and Serge had to undergo the same ceremony. We did not remain long, for Abtrei continued to offer us the pancakes and they were so awful that I swallowed them with difficulty, as one could not, under any circumstances, refuse to eat them. When I made inquiry for his wives, he exhibited some confusion, evidently having no desire to speak of them in Serge's presence.

'My wives may not enter, as brother Serge is here, and our customs do not permit the women to show their faces to men from without the household. Such is the law of Mohammed.'

In this and our subsequent conversation it developed that, in response to all our questions which he could not or would not answer, he pleaded 'the law,' and that was the end of it. It was very evident that his wives were interested enough to have wanted to come in, for we could continually hear whisperings and laughter from behind a curtained doorway and sometimes we caught sight of sparkling eyes that peeped through the hangings for a short second. I was just on the point of asking Abtrei to take me into the women's part of the house, when Serge stood up to go. Bowing solemnly, Abtrei accompanied us to the gate and made us each a present of another 'law' pancake, which we threw away with great relief the moment we had turned the corner.

A few days later we were invited to lunch with another of Serge's friends, also a horse-dealer. He was a typical rich Russian merchant, evidently of the peasant class, of enormous height and remarkably handsome, with a snow-white beard falling to his waist. In his house we encountered that special hospitality so common in Russia. Both he and his wife remained standing, after they had seated us at the table, bowing to us and repeating:

'Do not offend us, take some more, please.'

They offered us *pelmeni*, a Siberian dish made of chopped mutton, little pieces of which are rolled in very thin pastry, set out in the cold for several hours, and, when frozen hard, thrown into boiling water for about five minutes. In Siberia they are eaten, not by dozens, but by

scores, as they are very light. It was only when we were finishing our hearty meal that our host sat down near me and himself began to eat, plying us at the same time with various sweetmeats and fruits. Though I did not care much for this form of entertainment, where we had to taste everything that was offered and could not refuse any of the dishes without risk of mortally offending our hosts, Ina and I nevertheless continued to go everywhere with Serge and to take a great deal of pleasure from these unique experiences.

Life thus ran along peacefully for us until the first Bolsheviks appeared in Orenburg, fomenting a movement against the Cossack Ataman, Dutoff, who at that time was the real ruler of the town. Their propaganda immediately bore fruit in robberies, conflagrations, and unwarranted murders.

In the city there were many officers who had filtered in from all parts of Russia. Ataman Dutoff decided to group them under his command for the defense of the town, as there were not many Cossacks in service. He also called to arms the men of the neighboring villages, and soon gathered together many of the old Cossacks, the fathers of the younger ones who were still at the German front. Immediately after our arrival Serge had offered his services to the Ataman and a little later had been appointed commander of a mounted detachment.

One of the first among his many difficult tasks was the blowing-up of a Government spirit depot, which some returned disaffected soldiers had broken into and which the Ataman decided must be destroyed. During the awful days and nights that followed the drunken orgy of the whole populace, Serge was continuously on duty, so that I

remained alone with my maid at the hotel, as all the other members of the family had now moved into their house, which had been undergoing repairs at the time we arrived.

Often during the day I saw Serge galloping by with a band of his Cossacks. From the direction of the depot came the sound of shooting, and in the evening the whole sky was lighted up by the fires around us. Many a time I thought I must go away, leave everything and go anywhere, only to escape from the terrible nightmare of it all.

Then came the ghastly day when the Ataman gave orders for the blowing-up of the depot and our nerves were racked by the tremendous explosions. Three or four times during this day Serge appeared for a short five minutes to see that all was well with us. What depressed me most was the tense state he was in. If he had been calmer, I should certainly have taken a much less agitated view of it all; but, as matters stood, I knew that I must suppress any expression of my real feelings so that he could not notice anything out of the ordinary and would not worry about me. It was the only way in which I could help him.

During his visits he recounted some of the horrors of the preceding hours, in such a manner that it was easily seen that, in the tumult of the whole affair, he was worried and dazed and that his only relief lay in uncovering his impressions and feelings to the one who was closest to him.

It all worried me as much as, or perhaps more than, it did him. Was it because I was too young at the time or because I did not yet understand the fundamental principle of the soldier, that all orders had to be executed without question or deliberation? Somehow, during the

War, one was not so vividly impressed by the reports of losses in battle. Everything was on such a tremendous scale, so far off, that it was difficult to bring before one's eyes the real picture, even if one were most sympathetic and strove to do so. Involuntarily one saw everything in heroic colors. Those who fell were heroes, and those who survived were heroes as well. But here, where everything happened right under one's eyes, where some five people had been killed just under my windows and where Serge appeared with his *papakha* and coat shot through and with stains on his sword, all was terrible and ugly. Once, at the beginning of the orgy, I tried to tell him of my feelings.

'Can't you understand that I am ordered to do this?' he flared back at me. 'Do you think it is a pleasure for me? It is the Bolsheviks who have driven us into this river of blood and who will keep us in it until one side or the other is exterminated.'

After this I never questioned again his ruthless campaign against the Reds, because from that moment I understood the psychology of despair of every true Russian who loved his country, a psychology that obsessed and dominated him and all our White Army in general. But I must confess that I was afraid of Serge in that state of madness. I felt estranged from him, and it required a supreme effort to fight down and overcome this feeling.

Toward evening, Dunia, who was living with us in the hotel, came to me with a troubled look on her face.

'I bring you back all your diamonds,' she said in a whisper; 'they had better remain with you.'

'Why, what is the matter?' I asked.

'What? Do you not know that everybody is drunk? Just listen!'

I had been so deeply engrossed in my thoughts that only now did I hear consciously the wild screams, cries, and drunken songs which were filling the place.

'Go to your room, collect everything that is valuable, return here and lock the door. I shall go down and see the manager and tell him what is going on up here.'

As Dunia went out, I ventured down the stairs. The manager was lying snoring on his bed, while his wife was sitting beside him, crying helplessly.

'I can do nothing for you,' she replied to my demand. 'There is not one sober man or woman in the hotel. The best thing you can do is to lock yourself in your room, and God forbid that you attempt to go out. They have become wild beasts.'

So Dunia and I locked our door and continued to sit there in silence, only exchanging a word at rare intervals.

'If only Serge would return,' I thought.

Suddenly the room was lit up by a bright light. Half blinded, I heard a dreadful noise and Dunia's hysterical voice crying:

'Mr. Serge! Look, there he is!'

Rushing to the window, I saw the five-story building of the Singer Sewing Machine Company just across the street burning like tinder and was driven almost wild at discovering Serge, in his black coat and white *papakha*, standing on the very top of a small tower on the roof and outlined clear against the red glare beyond. With great swings of his axe, he seemed to be chopping away the very part of the structure on which he stood, and, as he finished, he sprang down upon the burning roof. He had scarcely

time to take two or three steps away from it, when the tower went down with a crash to the pavement and sent the sparks flying up to us. Serge began making his way toward the edge of the roof, sometimes crawling, sometimes leaping, and, having safely reached it, started down the fire escape. Even now, as I think back to it, I shudder and pray that I may never have to live again through such a trying moment.

'Somebody is knocking at our door,' whispered Dunia, pulling me by the sleeve.

'Who is there?' I asked.

'Open the door, madame,' blustered a drunken voice.

'What do you want?'

'We want to invite you to come and dine with us. Open the door or we shall break it in.'

'I shall not open the door. Go away or I shall fire,' I answered them in a loud voice, and at the same time drew out my small revolver.

Gradually the drunken voices died away. After we had waited some time, I decided to go down and find us something to eat. We were terribly hungry, as it was about midnight and we had had no dinner. I slipped out of the room and hurried through the dark hall, down the staircase, and into the restaurant. There was no light there either, and somewhere out of a corner came a drunken snore. I found the buffet, lighted matches, gathered on a plate some ham, bread, and cheese, and turned to go back. As I passed along the hall, I saw through the open door of one of the rooms a party of men, sitting and lying round a table on which stood a quantity of bottles and the remains of a dinner.

'Ah, there she is at last!' cried one of them, as he spied

me and dove out the door. He grabbed me by the arm, but was so unsteady from drink that I was able to push him back into his room and slam the door, after which I ran to my room and turned the key.

'Open, open immediately!' cried the men, as they pounded on my door.

'I shall shoot in a second if you do not go,' I answered as calmly as possible.

They swore abominably, but, to our infinite relief, withdrew to their room. Very soon after this Serge appeared, and I begged him to take us to his mother's house. I had had too many exhausting impressions that night and I felt that I was on the verge of hysteria. Serge, without bothering to inquire into the matter, put us into a sleigh and sent us off with an escort of Cossacks, away from that dreadful hotel.

## CHAPTER VII

### BACK FROM DEATH

And the Revolution, not the 'bloodless' but the real one, went on. Fires, murders, the capturing of the Bolsheviks, the executions, our small detachment fighting against the enormous forces of the Red Army advancing from the direction of Samara and coming all the time nearer to the town, the funerals of the victims of the Bolshevik cruelties, the details of these cruelties — all this had formed one continuous nightmare in my waking and sleeping hours.

These trying days brought Serge and myself closer together and also developed in me a very strong bond of affection for Ina. The house was still undergoing repairs, and, as a consequence, the only place where we could gather was my mother-in-law's sitting-room. There we remained the whole day, ever talking and talking. It was all rather depressing to me, especially as some of the members of the family did not sympathize with Serge's actions against the Bolsheviks and frequently started disputes over this tragically poignant question.

My mother-in-law, who is a remarkably good and straightforward woman, sided vigorously with Serge; while I myself always tried not to take any part in these discussions, until one side or the other forced me into it. With me the matter was entirely clear — one could not be for the Bolsheviks, so one had to be against them. Neutrality on this question was neither in Serge's character nor in mine; and I dreaded and shunned these conversations, as they could not accomplish or change any-

thing. That was why I always tried to slip away to our temporary bedroom, even though the two camp beds were the only furniture there, and I had to perch in the window to read or to write. It had always been a great trial for me to have to be constantly in a room with other people and never to be left alone. Ina, with a similar feeling, and having no room to herself, usually joined me, occupied the other window, and remained there with me in long, unbroken silences for hours.

I was reading a great deal during those days, trying in that way to still the feeling of anxiety which racked me when Serge was not there. This concern for him, which usually beset me half an hour after his departure, was so strong, and I strove so hard to conceal it from the others, that a nervous fever used to grip me which sometimes lasted for twenty-four hours, or until I heard his footsteps in the hall. And to the very present I remember this fever as the worst torture of those torturing days. Ina and my old Dunia were the only ones who realized what was the matter with me, all the others noticing little or nothing.

I certainly had reason to be uneasy, for during these days Serge's nervously strained condition had become so dreadful that he fell into a fury over the slightest report of Bolshevik atrocities, and in that state he quite forgot himself and was ready for anything. He had always been an enthusiast, and now he volunteered to undertake every dangerous task and, in general, became as desperate as a madman. He understood the impossibility of defending Orenburg; but, the clearer it grew to him, the more obstinately he fought for his cause. In the moments when he allowed himself to review the position clearly, his despair was crushing. I often tried to slip away with him

and follow him in his wanderings, for my idea always was to be near him in case anything should happen, and this seemed to me so natural that I was invariably cross when any one interfered to stop me. Serge would usually allow me to go, but Ina and my mother-in-law protested. For me, anything was better than to sit idly in the house until he should be brought home wounded or dead.

Ina and I took long walks every afternoon we could. The winter was a very cold one, but the weather was clear and beautiful. One day, when we were crossing the frozen Ural River and were just nearing the farther bank, we noticed something that looked like a house made of big blocks of ice, and heard from within it the sound of voices and the splashing of water.

'What do you think that can be?' Ina asked.

'Wait a second while I go and see,' I answered, and stole up quietly to peep through the door.

There were people bathing inside while the temperature of about ten degrees above zero (Fahrenheit) was stinging my ears. One of the bathers was undressed and was breaking, with a stick, the covering of ice which was constantly forming on the water. Another man was up to his neck in the water, and his face was blue. Ina and I shivered at the mere thought of such a bath, but, held by curiosity, we waited to see the two men come out and watched them dressing as they ran at full speed toward the town. We could see that their fingers were quite numb from cold, as one of them was not able to button his coat. We were horrified, but Dunia found it quite natural and related to me the way in which she used to go to the baths in her village when she was young. In our Russian peasant *bania*, it is always so hot and steaming that peo-

ple soap themselves and then take a vapor bath till the perspiration runs from them in streams. Then, stark naked, they run out into the snow in the yard with a pail of hot water in their hands which they throw over themselves. Dunia remembers all that with great delight and has shown much dissatisfaction with France because she cannot find here the Russian baths and their accompanying snow.

Strange to relate, Orenburg was the first and last town where I did not remark any visible panic before the coming of the Bolsheviks. Our front, if one could so call the place where our small detachment was struggling against the hordes of sailors and soldiers advancing from Samara, was simply a short line across the railroad not many miles west of the city. In the town we had established a system of night patrols in which all the inhabitants had to take part to guard against robbery and plunder. Personally, I enjoyed my go at sentinel duty, as it gave me the opportunity to leave the crowded drawing-room, with its overheated air and cigarette smoke. Then, at two o'clock in the morning, after my round was over, I usually went to the police station to secure the latest news from the Chief of Police concerning developments at the front. I had a permit for going about the town at night and, because Serge was always away with his detachment with the fighting force, I made use of it to secure the most authoritative news as to what was going on.

Though we did not speak about it to one another, we all felt that the victory would not be ours and constantly pondered over the question of what we should do. I knew that Serge and I could not possibly remain in Orenburg after the arrival of the Bolsheviks, for this would

mean certain death for us both. My mother-in-law and Ina would surely come with us, while my other sister-in-law and her husband had obviously decided to remain, as they continued to take no interest in events and tried as much as possible to stand aloof from every anti-Bolshevik movement. How cross we were inwardly with them for this incredible attitude!

One night, after having been stopped by the sentinels several times on my way, I arrived at the police station and had myself announced to the Chief. As no one went to bed during these days, I was at once ushered into his office, where he was resting on a divan, fully dressed and ready for action as usual.

'What, you have not seen your husband?' he asked me.

'Has he come back?'

'He was called back by the Ataman, as the detachment of Cossacks that was under his command refused to obey any one else. He has just gone home.'

Serge had been several days on the fighting line, and his return was a matter of much importance to us all, not only because it was Chirstmas Eve, but because the Bolsheviks were coming nearer every day and we had to decide what was to be done. As I hurried home and entered the dark hall, it seemed to me that I saw him standing there in his coat and fur hat. I went up to him and took him by the arm — but jumped back in horror; for the Serge I had seen crumpled up at the touch of my hand and fell to the floor with a strange, crackling sound, while from behind the door came the unrestrained laughter of both himself and Ina. It appeared the cold had been so intense that his coat had frozen stiff, and they

had the bright idea of standing it up in the middle of the hall with his *papakha* on top of it, just to frighten me.

Only a few days later — that is, in the beginning of January, 1918 — Serge came home one evening, led Ina and myself downstairs to the small suite into which we had just moved, and said gravely:

'Look here, we must begin to pack.'

'Is it as bad as that?'

'Things are unquestionably bad. The Reds are coming nearer and nearer and are now less than four miles from town. The Ataman has given directions for the evacuation of Orenburg and has promised to let all the people know a few hours beforehand. I have ordered three *troïkas* for us.'

'What? It means that the Bolsheviks are coming?' and Dunia's face and black spectacles appeared in the door. 'Am I to go with you also?'

'Certainly,' said Serge, 'you must come with us.'

'Ah, then everything is all right. What must we pack?'

Immediately she fell upon me with businesslike questions. Serge was hurrying us, begging me to be ready in two or three hours. Matters really seemed to be very bad. To the great despair of Dunia, we packed our things any way to get them all in. The same activity was going on upstairs in my mother-in-law's quarters, but the night passed and nothing happened. We lived thus in our trunks for about two weeks. Every day the Bolsheviks were drawing a little nearer or retiring half a mile. We became so accustomed to it all that the thought of leaving finally disappeared from our minds and we ceased speaking about it — all save Serge, who regularly asked every morning:

'Is everything ready?'

'Oh, everything; don't bother about it,' we answered him with a distinct feeling that he was quite too nervous over the whole affair — and the day took its usual course.

On the 16th of January Serge came home at midday, after having been nearly thirty-six hours on duty, so exhausted that he could hardly stand on his feet.

'I shall lie down,' he said to me; 'please waken me at three-thirty, as I must report at four.'

He made no allusion that day to our departure and showed no special signs of agitation. While I sat and read in my drawing-room, Ina came in, and together we decided to let him sleep until four o'clock, for he was pitiful to look upon. Then we began to talk and did not notice how the time was slipping by. Quite by chance no one went out for a walk that unhappy day, or perhaps we should have noticed an unnatural tension in all the people on the streets.

'Ina!' I exclaimed, as I happened to glance at the clock.

'Well?'

'Do you know what time it is?'

'No.'

'Half-past six, my dear!'

We both were silent and then began to laugh.

'It is all right. At all events, he has had a good sleep.'

'Yes, but he will be dreadfully cross.'

'Serge,' I called into the bedroom, 'it is half-past six. Get up.'

'Wha-a-t?' was heard in the furious voice of my husband, and in a moment he ran past us, already dressed in his overcoat and fastening his sword as he went. He threw

a quick glance at our quite amused faces and, remarking, 'I am going to the Ataman,' rushed out into the yard, where we immediately heard the galloping of his horse, which during these past days had always stood saddled and waiting for him.

As I write, I raise my head and watch through the window of our little cottage a fearful thunderstorm rolling in from the sea to break itself upon this coast of France. The air has become quite still and everything seems hushed; the electric tension has reached the utmost degree. All of this carries me back so vividly to the days I am describing that I feel as if for the second time I were living through those horrible hours of the past with the storm about to break over us.

Serge had just left when I began to be tormented by something like a foreboding.

'It was very wrong of me not to wake him in time. I hope he will not "catch it" from the Ataman,' I said to Ina.

I knew that I ought to be calm, that I must not yield to this feeling of nervousness, but I immediately began to shake as though I had chills and fever. We remained in my rooms until dinner-time, then went upstairs to my mother-in-law, where, the moment we sat down to dinner, Serge's servant announced, as he brought in the soup:

'The Bolsheviks are in the town.'

The storm had broken! Some one asked:

'Where is the Ataman with his Cossacks?'

'No one knows,' he answered, 'but they are gone from Orenburg.'

'And my husband? What about him?' I spoke aloud the thought that was searing me like a red-hot iron.

'We must wait,' came from the family, who sought to relieve the embarrassed servant.

'Yes, we must wait,' I assented mechanically, but uncontrollably impatient thoughts were hammering in my head as the dinner dragged on.

To wait, to wait! It is easy to say, but it is the worst torture one can imagine. Wait for what? For his coming to fetch us, for receiving the news of his arrest, of his execution or of the tortures which he had undergone? I knew he had gone to the Ataman's house or to the caravanserai, and these were the very first places to which the Bolsheviks would rush on entering the town. Every street boy knew him by sight, and his face and whole appearance were too familiar to remain unnoticed in the crowd. And still I could only wait and pray God to help me.

Somebody was saying something, then they were discussing and arguing; but, if any one had asked me about what they were speaking, I should not have been able to answer, for my mind was distant and dazed. When dinner was over, I moved across to the sofa to listen and wait. Analyzing every sound and every footstep below, I had the feeling that my head was bursting from the strain of concentrating my attention and remaining calm.

A friend of ours came in — I will not name him here, as he is still in Russia — and began excitedly to recount something, but suddenly stopped, looked round in consternation, and turned back to me.

'Where is your husband?'

'He is with the Ataman.'

Silence.

'You certainly did not hear what I said just now?'

'No, I was not giving attention. What is the matter?'

'The Ataman and all the Cossacks left Orenburg at about four o'clock. The town is temporarily in the hands of the Tartars. The Bolsheviks have entered it and have occupied both the caravanserai and the residence of the Ataman.'

He stopped, leaving me to deduce all and more than I wanted to from what he had said.

'Serge left the house at six-thirty . . . It is now about eleven o'clock . . . He has not seen the Ataman, has evidently rushed into the midst of the Bolsheviks, and by this time has been arrested if not killed!' flashed through my mind.

Suddenly all the tension of waiting disappeared. In its place I felt suffused by a new force, raised, as I was, by the necessity for action, and immediately I became quite calm.

'I am going,' I said, standing up.

'Where?'

'What a strange question! To find Serge, of course, and be with him.'

'You are mad! Just think, if they were to arrest you.'

'It does not matter in the least what happens to me. I know that I am going to look for Serge and that I shall find him because I *want* it to be so. Somehow I shall arrange to be near him, even if I cannot see him.'

'But you must understand that you cannot go.'

'I cannot do anything *but* go,' I snapped back, as I left the room.

'Listen; do come back for a second,' suddenly put in Ina, who had been silent until now.

I stopped.

'Just think of one fact. If Serge is arrested, it will be

easier for him to escape alone than with you; but, if you are arrested, he will go and offer to give himself up to free you.'

'Well, perhaps you are right. I shall wait until midnight. If he is not back by that time, it means he is unable to return, and then I shall go.' And I added, in my mind, 'To be with him, in case they shoot him, or to bring back his body if he is dead.'

I sat down again. It is strange that even now I can remember exactly the design of the rug which was thrown over the sofa. Once more commenced the trying period of waiting and thinking, but of a different kind. I did not for a moment stop planning what I ought to do and where I should go. The hands of the clock dragged unbearably up toward twelve.

'I shall go with you,' said our friend to me.

'All right,' I answered, and, at this distraught moment, did not even think of thanking that noble man who offered to risk his safety and perhaps his life for us. It appeared to me at the time that he could not have done otherwise; but it seemed to me as nothing in comparison with what I was sure Serge was passing through. At five minutes to twelve I stood up.

'I am going now.'

Nobody protested. Only Ina followed me. At that moment we heard below the banging of the entrance door, an exclamation from the servant, and the sound of some one running up the stairs. The door of the drawing-room opened. On the threshold stood Serge.

To my death-bed I never expect to forget his eyes and the expression with which he silently gazed at me as we ran into each other at the door. I recoiled a step, feeling

that this was a man returned from another world, who had not yet quite come back to life.

Every one rushed to him and plied him with questions, to which he answered briefly and coldly:

'I was arrested and locked up in a room by a Tartar officer, who tried to save me. He was unable to do it, so they took me out and put me to the wall.'

'What!'

'Yes,' he answered and became still more pale. His face was as white as a sheet with no expression in it, and only his eyes somehow became enormous and looked as though they saw something behind us which we did not see. Involuntarily I turned and looked behind me.

'Where is your sword?' I asked, desiring to turn his thoughts into other channels, for I knew the value he attached to it.

'They have taken it,' he answered through his set teeth.

It was evident he did not want to speak about anything.

'Come downstairs,' he turned and said to me in an imploring voice, and we went to our rooms.

I told the frightened servant to bring Serge something to eat. Dunia, with a serious face, tiptoed about the room. We sat quite silent. The mood we were all in was a strange one. Everybody was looking after Serge as though he were a man recovering from a deadly illness.

'Serge, you must leave the house and hide somewhere.'

'No, there is no use discussing it. I shall not go away, but shall go to bed at once, for I am completely fagged out.'

'All right,' I agreed, feeling it was not the moment to oppose him.

We examined together all the exits from our suite and opened one window in the bedroom close to the bed. All this was done quietly, even, I might say, with something approaching indifference, in view of the fact that we were preparing for Serge's flight in the event of the probable visit from the Bolsheviks. Serge lay down and was almost instantly asleep. I also lay down, but could not quiet my thoughts, for it seemed to me that I constantly heard *their* approaching footsteps, and each time a sound came I nervously reached for the revolver under my pillow. My mother-in-law and Ina came and went a few times, but always in silence, for they looked into the bedroom only to see if Serge was asleep. When I made them a sign, they disappeared.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONVOYING A HUNTED SOUL

'THE essential thing now is that Serge should get away immediately,' was the thought that haunted me all the time, but I knew that this 'essential thing' was most difficult for him to carry through.

'Serge, wake up,' I called to him at about half-past five, unable to bear it any longer.

He immediately jumped up, wide awake, and it was evident that the tension in him had not relaxed.

'You must leave the house.'

'That is out of the question, for I cannot think of leaving mother, Ina, and you alone.'

'But you cannot protect us in any way. You will be killed instantly,' my mother-in-law and Ina, who had come down in their dressing-gowns, added to my arguments.

'I cannot do it! Don't you understand? I cannot and will not go away, for I should go mad knowing I had left you alone here.'

At last, about six o'clock, we persuaded him to go and seek advice from the friend who had been with us the previous evening. While I was dressing, I watched him through the window cross the desolate white snow-covered square and disappear round the corner. He was back in about half an hour. We all plied him with our questions as to the decision.

'He says I must go as quickly as possible, and that it is pure madness for me not to have left sooner, because the

Bolsheviks are making searches everywhere and have already asked him about me,' my husband answered, in a depressed tone of voice.

'Go this instant!' I cried madly. 'Don't you see you are only tormenting us for nothing?'

Quite passively Serge allowed his clothes to be changed for those of his Cossack servant. After he had shaved his mustache, we cut his hair and blackened his eyebrows with a burned cork.

'Be quick, be quick,' we urged one another, for we had to get it all done before the servants discovered what we were about. The secret was known only to Dunia and to Serge's body-servant, of whom we could be quite sure.

Serge was ready, and it only remained for him to say good-bye and go away, when suddenly he sank down on the bed in despair and said in an imploring voice:

'I cannot. I simply cannot leave you. I am going to stay. God knows what they might do to you — they will certainly take you as a hostage, as you are my wife.'

'If I come with you, will you go then?' I asked him. I hated to go, for I felt that it would be unbearably hard and difficult; but it was our last chance.

'Yes,' he answered.

I rushed to Dunia's room.

'Get your clothes off,' I ordered her. She just looked at me and began to undress hurriedly. 'Everything, even your underwear,' I continued at her. 'Mine are marked and, if I am searched, will immediately reveal that I am not a peasant.'

In some three or four minutes I had changed my clothes, handed Dunia my diamonds, kissed her, given her some money, and said:

'I will let you know where we are. You can leave all our things here and come to us at our first call.'

After Ina had brought us some bread, salt, sugar, and tea in a little sack, we passed stealthily out through the gate, taking care not to be seen in our disguise by the other servants. It was a bright, sunny morning. The snow creaked under our feet, our eyes blinked in the dazzling whiteness, and the intentness of the cold made it difficult to breathe. While I was dressing, I had looked at the thermometer and found that it registered thirty-seven below zero (the equivalent of forty-six below zero, Fahrenheit).

We had taken the main street. I was protecting my face in a big shawl, which Dunia had thrown over my head, while Serge was sheltering his eyes as though from the sun. As I indicated above, everybody in the town, even the smallest street urchin, knew us by sight. On passing various individuals, Serge explained to me in a whisper:

'That fellow is a Bolshevik whom I arrested three days ago'; or, 'We searched the house of this man at the beginning of the week'; or, 'I sent that bird to prison only yesterday morning.'

They had all been set free, and I cannot say that these communications were comforting, inasmuch as I felt sure that one of them would ultimately recognize us and leave us with little hope of escape. We finally hailed an *izvostchik* in front of the hotel.

'Where shall I go?' the man asked.

'Straight ahead,' answered Serge.

Then began that flight across nearly five hundred miles of snow-covered, wind-blown steppes which my

husband has described in his own narrative of some of our experiences. But there were features of it, of course, which were individual to myself and which will never leave my memory.

One of the strongest of these impressions was the experience of nearly freezing. The sensation began in the hands and the head — I was covered with only a thin woolen shawl. At first I felt terrible pains, as though some one were stripping off my skin; then a numbness crept over me, during which it seemed as though my head were being squeezed in a vise. Following this came a feeling of utter and wonderful calm. The pain disappeared and left me with the comfortable feeling that I was going to sleep. I knew, as through a haze of understanding, that I was freezing; but in that state death seemed only agreeable. Serge saw what was happening to me and tried, as best he could, to shelter me from the wind with his body and made me talk. I answered him with effort — my lips seemed loath to move.

At last we arrived at our next stopping-place, where I climbed out of the sleigh with difficulty. As I began to warm up, I was excruciatingly tortured by the pain of my frozen body coming back to life. Our remarkably cordial Tartar host rubbed my hands and feet with snow to bring out the frost and restore the circulation. When we left him an hour and a half later, he gave me an enormous sheepskin coat, saying:

'It belonged to my dear wife. Keep it if you need it, or send it back by the *yamstchik*.'

The snowstorm we had been having was over, and the day was now beautifully clear. I felt comparatively warm and busied myself with diverting Serge and making him

forget his thoughts about Orenburg. It was then that he recounted to me for the first time all that had happened to him that last night in town. When I felt that I now dared ask him more about the details of their attempt to shoot him, he confessed to me that he believed he must have fainted from fear just before the soldiers fired, and that his knees gave way such a fraction of a second in advance of the crash of the rifles that the soldiers, in the indistinct light of the moon, never realized what had happened nor saw that they had only shot off his *papakha* instead of his head. Truly it was not without reason that I had felt so anxious that evening, while waiting for him.

The village at which we arrived this night was a Russian instead of a Tartar one, and it was there that we fell in with the Bolshevik sailor *yamstchiks* who nearly drove Serge into revealing himself through the incident of their having on the table a bottle of the vodka taken from the distillery on his family's estate. At their table, as everywhere, it was very difficult for me to play the part of a peasant woman and do without a knife and fork or eat soup out of the common tureen. It was likewise far from easy to fall into their way of speaking; but what I feared would give me away, as glaringly as though I had never changed my costume, were my hands. Try as I would to hide them or to rub them so that they would be red, they filled me with fear and tormented me all the time.

A subsequent night in a Tartar village was much more agreeable and interesting for us. The genial old host led us away through half the village from the big establishment, where the travelers stayed, to a neat little house in

which his older wife lived, while the younger one presided over the hostelry.

The cottage was an exceptional one. It was unusually large, though it consisted of only two rooms, one of which was given to us. The floor of this was completely covered with thick ancient Persian and Bokhara rugs; while at the windows, instead of the ordinary curtains, were hangings of hand-embroidered Bokhara silk. A bench, or raised platform, about six feet wide and nearly twice as long, served as a bed and was covered with layers of the soft, thin, striped carpets which are woven by the Tartar women and dyed with native vegetable colors in brilliant hues.

In the corner lay a small silk prayer rug, carrying in its design a picture of the Gates of Mecca. I could scarcely take my eyes from it, it was so beautiful in its coloring, blending its dark blues and greens with beautiful browns and grays. On it rested a silver basin and a graceful silver ewer, the vessels requisite for the ceremonial ablutions required before prayer.

The next room was as lovely as the first we had entered. One whole wall was covered by a fluffy white rug, with a fine black design running through it, before which on a raised platform sat in stately immobility the Tartar's elder wife, with her feet crossed under her. She was an extraordinarily ugly old woman, but had a remarkably kind expression in her eyes and was quite a lady in her manners. One could see that she was the real head of the house, and that her husband turned to her with much deference on household matters. It was very agreeable for me to sit and chat with her, though we understood each other with difficulty. Obviously she knew well her

own position, as she never moved from her place and expected all her young daughters and daughters-in-law to run to do her bidding at a single glance from her. She evidently liked me, for she began to speak to me of her riches and later drew out a few sacks of gold coins to spread before me. All these represented most varied currencies, while some of them were even of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. She explained to me that they were given to her as a dowry when she married.

After a wonderful rest that night in these genial surroundings and the following night at the estate of our friend H——, we turned up at the establishment of a Chuvash *yamstchik*, who refused to take us farther that day on the ground that his horses were exhausted. After Serge had argued and pleaded with him for two hours, I had quite made up my mind to pass the night there, when I heard most delighted greetings and slappings on the back going on between the two of them. They had not only come to an agreement, but had recognized each other. When Serge was still a boy, he had come for fishing to these parts, which were not far from his estate, and this *yamstchik*, Paul, had driven him about. Now, after fifteen years, he had suddenly recognized my husband. Their joy was great! Thanks to all this, the horses were ready in five minutes — they were quite fresh, by the way — and we dashed off on a dreadful road. One must say 'dashed off,' as the word 'drove' would be quite out of place here. Paul in his joy had, I think, taken a glass too much, at least for the rôle of *yamstchik*, and, as we were taking our places in the sleigh, he warned me: 'Hold on, madame, I shall show you how Paul drives his friends!'

Perhaps it is the best way in which a Chuvash can show his love for his friends. This may be, but I would not have driven my worst enemy thus! We dashed along a narrow, hard-packed road with the soft snow on either side nearly five feet deep. When we met other sleighs, a real fight began for the right of way. Paul, with barbaric yells, lashed his own horses across their backs and cut the oncoming steeds on their noses, which caused them to bolt and jump off the raised road into the snow and to overturn the sleighs and passengers, at which he galloped past the cursing, shipwrecked ones, nearly upsetting us in the meantime.

'Hold on tight!' shouted Serge, seeing in my expression that I was beginning to feel cross. 'He does it because he is so pleased!'

It was the next day that we had our experience of being overhauled by a Bolshevik Commissar, who was scouring the country for the leader of the Cossack detachment in Orenburg and to whom Serge insisted that he was taking his sick wife to Sterlitamak to consult a doctor. Quite familiar by now with being assigned a different rôle at each dramatic occasion, I moaned through all their conversation, sometimes in fear and sometimes to keep from laughing.

But there was no humor in the experience of that same afternoon when our little boy *yamstchik* sat benumbed and crying on his box, while Serge tried to encourage the horses onward through the blinding snow in which we had lost our way. It was then that I underwent my second experience of nearly freezing to death and had to be carried into a house when we at last made our way to a village through the guidance of a barking dog.

The Tartars to whom chance brought us for the night were very kind to us, particularly considerate in view of the fact that their eldest son was to be married that very evening. They even invited us to attend the feast following the ceremony, before which Serge, really touched by their sincere cordiality and knowing well the feelings of the Tartars toward his family, disclosed to them his identity, with the happy result that we were led at once to the place of honor.

Before the ceremony, the women, who were already in their finest clothes, surrounded me, offering me dresses and ornaments, as they were quite astonished not to see me wearing earrings, necklace, or any other jewelry. They turned me round, felt my dress, and touched my hands. It all seemed very funny to me, and I tried to explain our position to them, but I fear with imperfect results, as I did not speak Tartar and they understood little Russian.

The marriage ceremony appealed to me as quite original. While the bridegroom was taken to the mosque by his male relatives, I went to see the bride, who sat waiting for him in one of the rooms of the house. The women were dressing her when I entered. Over her white blouse, embroidered with bright silks, and her light-blue silk trousers, they hung on her quite an armor of gold coins, fastened together with golden links and reaching from her shoulders to her knees. On her head she wore a small, flat, red velvet hat, called *tibitieika.* From it there fell to the ground and entirely covered her a long white veil, embroidered all over with an intricate pattern in gold thread. Her hair was plaited in some fifteen to twenty thin braids, with colored ribbons woven into them and

gold coins fastened at the ends. Two old women — probably her mother and her future mother-in-law — were solemnly washing her hands and face with water poured from a copper pitcher of unusual form into a basin of similar metal. From the explanation of one of the women I understood that these articles were a necessary part of a bride's outfit. After this all the women sat down and, with most serious expressions on their faces, began singing ceremonial marriage songs.

The Tartar melodies have quite an Oriental character, with a range of only four or five notes. They are very monotonous and are always in a minor key, while even in the gayest dances one can never make out the tempo, nor the beginning nor the end of them.

I watched the proceedings with the keenest pleasure, as this was the real wedding ceremony for the Tartar bride, who does not go to the mosque with the groom. It was interesting to note that the Tartars had the same custom of arranging the bride's hair that our Russian peasants have, except that with our people the bridesmaids, with appropriate songs, take down the coiffure of an unmarried woman, comb her hair, and twist it up under the *kitchka*, or shawl, which all married women wear. With our peasants all this must be accompanied by the cries and complaints of the bride, as she says good-bye to her maiden life and her girl friends. Meanwhile the matrons present are singing joyful songs in praise of married life. In Russia we have thousands of such peasant songs for all ceremonial occasions, different ones in different districts, and among them many remarkable for their musical charm. But during this Tartar ceremony there was neither shouting nor laughter. In strong contrast

everybody was solemn, even the bride trying to suppress her feelings and not to show, by sign or look, the agitation she naturally felt at that moment.

At last the bridegroom returned, the marriage ceremony was over, and we were all invited to sit down to the feast. There was little variety in the dishes — mutton with rice, then rice with mutton, horseflesh prepared in two or three ways, followed by sweetmeats, but so excessively sweet that one ate them with difficulty. As a drink we had koumiss.

With the banquet over, we were conducted to a newly furnished, very clean room, which we were informed was to be the abode of the bride and groom. In the morning, before we set off, they urged us most cordially to remain and live with them for all time.

'You will be happy with us. No Bolsheviks will be able to find you. We shall hide you and give you money,' our host said persuasively to Serge. But we finally left them, sent on our way with their warm blessings and with an equally warm gratitude in our hearts for their treatment of us, as well as with additional proof that the Tartars are really splendid people.

## CHAPTER IX

### TRAINING FOR HARDSHIPS

We arrived shortly afterward at the station of Raievka, where we were to take the train for Moscow. The chief occurrences of this journey back to the city which we had so gladly abandoned have also been chronicled in my husband's story of it, though he has naturally failed to set down the state of my own feelings during such moments as those when his 'executioner,' Popoff, sat opposite us in the station restaurant or when the Red soldiers chased and fired at us as we ran, hand in hand, for the moving train and were pulled into it by two friendly soldiers of an old regiment. My heart thumps now when I recall the way my long fur coat got under my foot on the car steps and nearly frustrated our attempt to board the train. Nor could my husband do justice either to my thoughts and feelings during our early morning ride on the bumpers of a freight car back to a smaller station, where we might hope to battle successfully for places before the train filled up.

And then, when the prize of freedom to go where we would in the city of Moscow was just within our grasp, I came close to nullifying all our efforts by calling to Serge in French, as he was allowed to pass through the exit barrier ahead of me, to secure a drosky for us while I was undergoing examination.

'Ah, what is that?' snapped a Jewish Commissar, who sprang up beside me with a fierce expression on his face.

'What is that?' I threw back at him with as much of a

challenge and looked impudently straight into his eyes, feeling that only impudence could save us then. 'Do you not understand Lettish? And I thought you were a Lett!' As the Letts were very much respected by the Bolsheviks for their cruelty, I felt sure I could reach him in this way.

'Excuse me, *Tovaristch* Madame, I did not hear you clearly,' he apologized, and shouted: 'Let the *Tovaristch* through,' gallantly offering me his hand and leading me out into the street to deliver me over to my astonished husband.

It was dark and warm. The water from the thawing snow covered the streets, but what a blessing it was to paddle with my felt boots in these pools with the thought:

'Finished! We have freed ourselves, and here in the vast population of Moscow all trace of us will be lost, so that at last we can rest.'

When we arrived at my mother's apartment house, the concierge did not recognize us in the dark and was so averse to letting us in that it took us a long time to make her believe who we were.

My mother's maid stepped back and gave a cry when she opened the door of the apartment. I went to the drawing-room, not knowing how to enter without startling my mother, who was ill and resting on a couch there.

'May I come in?' I ventured at last, trying to speak in a natural voice.

'Come in!'

'We are in disguise, mother, so do not be frightened.'

It is almost idle to try to describe what happened next. My brother rocked with laughter when he spied us. We had to recount all our adventures until late into the night. Probably we felt so happy at being together

again that we related everything in very radiant colors. It was only my mother who penetrated our unnatural mood, while my brother and aunts laughed heartily and we followed their example.

At first our life in Moscow was very quiet. We leased a small flat, out of which the Bolsheviks, however, made us move at the end of three weeks. We ate goodness knows what, stood in line for six or eight hours for sugar, tea, meat, etc.; but all this was nothing compared to the life in Orenburg, so that we really felt quite at ease.

Trouble began for us about the first of April. Serge had been drawn into different secret organizations of officers. I was very much against this and several times managed to persuade him to keep away from them, but in the end he and some others banded together under the pretext of running a garage. Again he became nervously active, always trying to organize something against the Bolsheviks, and once more I had to draw out of him, word by word, the details of his plans and thus prepare myself to be always ready for any sudden developments.

In this month of April the terror in Moscow redoubled. We were living in two small rooms at the front of the building. The weather was very warm, so that our windows always stood open. During the night shooting was frequent in the streets; for the Bolsheviks aimed thus to frighten the peaceful population, so as to be able to keep them better in hand. Every night from the military school, which was nearly opposite our house, we heard firing, drumming, and cries — executions were taking place there. I never could steel my nerves to these indescribably terrible sounds. I could sleep only until the

report of the first shot reached my ears; then for three or four hours I lay shuddering at every sound, and involuntarily my imagination pictured the scene in the courtyard of the military school, with the men and women waiting for their death, some of them weeping and screaming and some as calm as stone. How many people we knew and loved ended their days behind those walls! In the daytime quiet returned, and every morning we said with relief: 'Another night passed without a search.'

A terrible life it was, indeed! We were warned that the Bolsheviks were searching for my eldest brother, so that he had no option but to go away to the Caucasus, whither his family had already removed. As a result of his going, all our private affairs, which he and one of my father's greatest friends X——, were superintending, were being greatly neglected. Then X—— asked me to take my brother's place to help him in deciding many questions about which he did not want to go very often to consult my mother, knowing well that it would expose her as well as himself to suspicion and investigation.

X——'s fears were well founded, inasmuch as he was a member at that time of one of the most active anti-Bolshevik organizations and had to take the precaution of never spending two successive nights in the same house. Though in everything else I was trusted by him, I could not induce him to give me any positive information regarding his activities. Every day he gave me his address for that night and always avoided my questions by saying: 'It is dangerous for you to know too much. Remember even the walls have ears.'

We used to meet in the study of my brother's house, where we sat near the window with the blinds down, so

that we could peep through and observe what was going on in the street.

'Some soldiers are coming,' one of us would remark, at which we would remain silent until they had passed. If they stopped and rang at the front door, X—— would hastily slip out the back entrance, through the courtyard, and into another street, while I would go to speak with the *Tovaristchi* and try to detain them as long as possible. Everything was ready for these occasions, with the butler and servants all in the secret. My presence in the house was explained by Serge's garage being located in this courtyard, and I usually told them that I had brought dinner for my husband.

The tragic sequel to it all was that, after we left Moscow, X—— was arrested and died in prison from hunger, owing to the fact that he had been seriously ill and had not been able to secure in prison the special foods which were necessary for him.

My mother, who had until now continued to supervise the warehouse of the nobles' relief organization, had to give it up. One fine day the Red soldiers came to the place, arrested everybody, took my mother to a separate room, and, after breaking open the safe and taking all the money it contained, proposed to her that she continue the work on a salary, which my mother refused to do.

'To work without a salary is charity on your part, a purely "bourgeois" idea; so it will be necessary for you to go away, *Tovaristch* Madame.' These were their exact words.

Within two or three weeks after my mother had left, nothing remained of one of the largest warehouses in Russia — everything had been stolen.

At this time we were having our meals with my mother. Owing to the increasing difficulty of securing provisions, especially sugar and flour, we existed in a half-hungry state and invented all sorts of extraordinary things to eat. We made cakes from potato peelings and sweet bread from carrots, which furnished the necessary sugar. Horse-flesh was served in various ways nearly every day, as one could rarely secure the ordinary meats. Instead of sugar, Serge and I used saccharine, which could be found in quantities and was comparatively cheap. The ultimate repulsiveness of dishes made with this substitute can be understood only by people who, like the population of Moscow, used it constantly; for it leaves a bitter taste in the mouth, as though one had been eating quinine.

The so-called 'house-committees' at this time had greatly enlarged their sphere of activity. The president of the committee controlling our building was a Jew named Slavin. He 'speculated' shamelessly, buying products from some unofficial source and selling them at wild prices to the tenants.

In December my mother had bought from the house committee one pood — about thirty-six pounds — of sugar, which, needless to say, was finished by about the middle of March, when we managed by divers ways to secure further intermittent supplies. The two aunts who lived with my mother were so old that they could eat only certain dishes and could not get along without sugar, milk, and white bread.

In May we had nearly a tragedy over this miserable house committee's sugar. The concierge wanted for some reason to revenge herself on the president of the committee and complained to the Bolshevik Police Commis-

sariat that Slavin was speculating in sugar. Speculation was punished very severely at that time, and speculators were frequently thrown into prison, from which, in those days of terror, there was only one way out — through execution to make room for new arrivals.

The Commissariat turned the affair over to the Cheka, after which endless investigations followed. As they were unable to find more than one or two pounds of sugar in our flat, they merely imposed a heavy fine on all concerned, except upon Slavin, who managed to have himself overlooked. On the other hand, my mother was fined one thousand roubles and was ordered to make payment before June 1st. Though we sought at the outset to persuade them that it was not a case of speculation and that the wretched sugar had been eaten up long ago by us, they persisted so stubbornly in their accusations that my mother directed us to cease all remonstrance and decided to pay, just to be left in peace.

On the 27th of May, three days before the term expired, my mother sent for our advising attorney and, handing him the thousand roubles, asked him to pay the fine to the Cheka. Serge, happily, had gone to his garage. I was just on the point of leaving for my daily business talk with X—— when there was a ring at the door. The maid uttered a cry in the hall, just after which the vice-president of the house committee, without knocking, entered the drawing-room, followed by four armed sailors.

'Princess, we have come . . .' one of them began, looking rather confused.

'What is the matter?' asked my mother.

I must acknowledge that these people were quite polite and tried to say what they had to as mildly as possible.

'We have come with reference to the sugar matter, for you have not yet paid your fine.'

'I know, but we still have three more days before the time for payment expires, and I have just given the money to this gentleman with instructions to pay it to-day,' answered my mother, at the same time showing them the document that we had received from the Cheka. After examining this, one of the sailors replied:

'Strange, but you are right. You have until the first of June. Nevertheless, we have an order to arrest you and must ask you to follow us.'

'But why, when you see it is a mistake?'

'Oh, we shall investigate the whole matter at the Cheka.'

We knew full well that many people had been arrested in that manner, without any real connection with the charge against them, and had been kept for months, waiting, in the dreadful conditions of the big prisons, to be questioned, and then were finally shot without even an examination.

My mother was quite calm, but I was shaking all over, while the lawyer and the vice-president were as white as sheets. It was clear that the Bolsheviks were only trying to find a pretext to arrest my mother. Was it because they could not forget her refusal to coöperate with them in the warehouse, or did they simply think she was too influential and popular and might work effectively against them? Heaven only knows.

'I am coming with you,' I said to my mother, feeling it would be impossible for me to remain in uncertainty as to her fate.

'No, we must take the citizen alone. We have been so

ordered,' declared one of the sailors; but, looking at me, he suddenly changed his tone and continued:

'Do not be anxious, miss. Your mother will be safe, and we shall do our best to have her questioned immediately. You may follow us if you wish. Perhaps you will be able to secure a pass to see her.'

My mother entered the motor-car that had brought them, three sailors took their places inside with her, two others mounted the running-boards with fixed bayonets, and the car went off at a mad speed. The advocate and I ran to the first drosky and galloped after them to the Cheka.

The famous and infamous Cheka was located in the enormous building of the Iakor Insurance Company in Lubianka Street, one part of which was given over to various offices and another remodeled into a prison, while in the cellars tortures, excruciating beyond the powers of the imagination, were inflicted. Some of the people who were arrested with or without reason were taken down into the cellars and — but it is perhaps better not to attempt to relate what the Chinese, Letts, and Jews did to them. However, I may record that I saw one man who had escaped from that hell by a miracle and for six months after was raving mad.

On arriving at the building we pressed hurriedly into the hall where the passes for entering the other parts of the institution were issued. About twenty guards stood around the room, while at a table in the center sat an old man who was occupied in writing out the passes. The room was crowded with people who had come to see their relatives or friends who had been arrested. In most cases passes were not issued, and the prisoners, in dirty,

torn clothes and with the faces of martyrs, were brought into the room for a two- or three-minute talk and then led back into the engulfing depths of this living tomb. I saw some tragic scenes during these meetings.

Some other persons had come on business and stood waiting with us for their turn to be given a pass. As we found ourselves forty-second and forty-third in the line and as it was already eleven o'clock, I was thinking with dread that I should not have time to secure my pass before the office closed at twelve. From time to time new prisoners were being brought in from the street. Some bore themselves bravely, others showed fright and terror in their faces, and once a woman in hysterics was dragged in with a baby of two or three months which a soldier carried behind her. All too soon the clock chimed twelve.

'No more passes will be delivered until to-morrow,' the old man announced, whereupon he was immediately stormed by the whole line, but with no result, as he remained inexorable and left the crowd no option but to disperse.

'Wait a second,' our lawyer whispered to me.

Just at that moment a woman came up to me and said in broken, pleading tones:

'For goodness' sake, help me. I have been coming here every day for the past three weeks and I cannot get a pass. My husband was arrested, and I do not even know whether he is alive.'

The old man turned and looked at us. I thought it was the moment to act and, approaching his table, I sat down and started to question him.

'Is it for a pass?' he interrupted me. 'I can't give you one now; come to-morrow.'

At the same time he made a typical sign behind his back with his fingers, which admitted of no doubt as to its meaning. I felt the lawyer thrusting a bank-note into my hand and began to question the old man as to the best means of securing a pass, at the same time pushing the money under his papers in a way that he could not fail to see.

'Well, for once I shall go beyond the rules and give you one.'

'Then write it, please, for me and this lady, "Madame X——,"' I said, giving her name; and a minute later we were permitted to enter through that portal which so many others would have given anything short of their lives to pass through in the opposite direction.

The woman thanked me profusely, so profusely, in fact, that, in my eagerness to be away from her, I forgot the pass that she was holding in her hand and rushed up the staircase, as the office I was seeking was on the fourth floor. My arrival was timely, for just as I opened the door I heard some one announcing:

'Bring in Citizen M——,' and my mother was led into the room.

I shut the door and silently took my post in a corner. My mother noticed me, as she entered, and shook her head with a look of disapproval.

'Citizen M——, you are accused of . . .'

'First of all, give me a chair, for I am not going to stand,' interrupted my mother calmly, but in a manner that did not invite discussion.

One of the six judges behind the long table looked up with surprise at my mother, arose, and offered her his own chair.

'Citizen M——,' he continued more politely, 'you are accused of speculating in sugar and of not paying your fine.'

'I did not speculate, but simply ate the sugar with my family; and, as for the fine, we have until the first of June to pay it, and to-day is only the 27th of May,' my mother answered.

'No.'

'Yes.'

'It is not so, I tell you.' The Bolshevik was growing angry. 'You will pay instantly the ten thousand roubles, or we shall find a way to shake it out of you!'

'Not ten thousand roubles, but one thousand,' continued my mother in the same unruffled manner.

'Ten thousand, I tell you!'

'One moment. I suppose all your cases are properly recorded, as in other regular courts?'

'Certainly, everything follows the proper procedure here.' The Bolshevik was touched on a sore point.

'Well, then find the record and read it.'

'Bring the file of the case,' roared the judge.

Somebody began to search in the next room, where a noise of papers was heard, but it was only after a long, tedious strain of nearly twenty minutes that a secretary brought in the dossier requested. The *Tovaristch* examined the papers for a long time, looked confused, and then, addressing my mother with very evident politeness, said:

'You are right, citizen, it is only one thousand roubles, and you have until the first of June. Would you like, perhaps, to pay now?'

'Yes,' answered my mother, 'here is the money.'

'Then please be kind enough to sign this paper.'

I went up to my mother and peeped over her shoulder to see what she was writing because I was afraid for her. At the same time a feeling of pride and excitement had crept over me when I heard her speak so authoritatively to these men, who were accustomed to seeing everybody tremble before them.

The *Tovaristch* dictated: 'I hereby pledge myself never to speculate in the future,' to which my mother immediately added on the document, 'and assert that I have never speculated before.'

'Why have you put that in?' cried the judge with a goodly show of temper.

'Because it is the truth,' answered my mother. 'What next?'

'Sign it "Citizen M——."'

Instead, my mother signed her full title, 'Princess M——,' at which the *Tovaristch* cursed roundly.

'I told you to sign "Citizen."'

'I signed with my regular signature, for the only things you cannot take away from us are our names and our titles.'

The man was silent and without further ado gave my mother a permit to leave the building. In the corridor we met our advocate, who had also been able to buy his way through.

'Where is your pass?' he asked me, when we were approaching the sentinel at the front entrance.

'Heavens! That lady we helped through has it!'

'They will never let you out!'

We were aghast for a moment, but immediately realized that we must make a desperate try at it. We all

approached the guard and, while my mother was showing her pass, I heard our lawyer saying: 'Will you give me a light, please?'

As he secured the light from the soldier, he managed to knock the hot ashes from the man's cigarette into his extended hand. The guard swore at our friend, while he in turn excused himself profusely, and thus gave us time to get out into the street, jump into a drosky, and be off.

At home we found many people who had heard of my mother's arrest and had come for news. I immediately telephoned Serge and X——, to both of whom I had word sent before my departure not to follow me to the Cheka. They had consequently sat during the past five hours in dread of what had happened and could still happen, and rushed home on receiving my call. Thus happily ended our unexpected visit to the Cheka, the terror of all Russia and the tomb of so many souls.

After this my mother had to be very careful, for it was an established fact that, so long as you had not attracted the attention of the Cheka, you might live in comparative peace, but from the moment they had taken notice of your existence you could not be sure what a day might bring forth. I know many people who were arrested several times and released after ten or fifteen days without having any formal charges preferred against them. Probably it was just a part of their system of frightening people, and well they succeeded, for the life in the prisons was too terrible and shocking to be described. The unwarranted torments of the Cheka jail can never be told, even by those who have had their souls seared by its unimaginable cruelties.

## CHAPTER X

### PLUNDERING OUR PLUNDERERS

In the middle of June the weather became so hot that Serge and I decided to go for a fortnight to my mother's estate near Moscow. Having telephoned the housekeeper to prepare several rooms for us, we set forth on foot early in the morning and arrived at about eleven o'clock to find her alone in the house, scrubbing and cleaning.

The steward on our place turned out to be a scoundrel. Having been designated by the Bolsheviks as the Commissar of the estate, he could do anything he chose to annoy us. In the exercise of this power he forbade us to have milk from our cows or fruit from our hothouses, saying that everything was sold. In spite of this we had all we wanted, as our gardeners and other servants were so incensed by his orders that they secretly brought everything in great quantities. But this stealing one's own property and the shamelessness of the steward worked so on my nerves that I decided to return to town and went away alone, leaving Serge to remain until I could send him word that it was safe for him to come back to Moscow.

On my return, X—— gave me very disagreeable news. During our absence the Commissariat had asked two or three times about my mother, and the butler had answered that he did not know her address.

'The Princess must go away for some time,' said X——, 'and you know that it is beginning to be dangerous for you also to remain in Moscow. If your husband

continues in his present activities, he will certainly be arrested. I have been told that he has already attracted the attention of the authorities.'

X—— did not realize at the time how well founded his fears were. Several times Serge had been in trouble with the Bolsheviks and, as a result of his affiliation with anti-Red organizations, had again allowed his reckless daring to assume the upper hand. I tried to shut my eyes to what he was doing, feeling that my influence over him had been entirely lost. I even felt more at ease when he was not with me. I would find myself thinking, 'Anyhow, I do not know what is happening to him at this moment and have no special reason to be anxious about him,' but never succeeded in entirely quieting myself. By evening a nervous fear would fasten itself upon me, and my head used to feel so racked by the thoughts which had been worrying me the whole day that I could only grind my teeth convulsively to keep from screaming aloud. Oh, those horrible days! I grew thinner and thinner, losing forty pounds during the last four months of our Moscow life, as a result of that unnerving strain in which I lived every minute of the day and night.

Opposite our house was situated a Commissariat office to which motor-cars drove up several times every night. No matter how often they came, I sprang up as each one arrived with the thought that it meant a search. I would take my husband's Saint George's Cross and his diary, lower them out of one of the back windows, and would then listen. If the Bolsheviks knocked at the entrance below, I would awaken Serge, who went out into the street through the back door and courtyard. Then I would hurry up to my mother, almost always with the

same thought, that I ought not to frighten her, as it would have a bad effect upon her weakened heart. During some of these nights Serge had to make most nimble and dangerous exits in order to avoid being caught. The searches were becoming more and more frequent. It seems strange to state it, but it is nevertheless a fact that nearly every time we knew about them beforehand. First of all, whenever the Bolsheviks decided to visit a certain place, the electric lights in the street marked for their attention were not extinguished at ten o'clock as was usually the case. Then, not a day passed without some of our friends running in to say that inquiries were being made for Serge and that they were looking for him.

My head was likewise agog with all the endless stories about our safe-deposit boxes, whose contents the Bolsheviks had ordered requisitioned; about money, which the new decrees forbade withdrawing from the banks; and about the permits of all kinds which I had to secure to cover our departure from Moscow. Added to all this, the thought of the danger that Serge was running drove me nearly mad. I begged him to leave town for the sanatorium whither we had managed to persuade my mother to go pending the securing of our traveling permits. Only after many protests on his part and my own promise to go and see them every day did he finally consent to make the move. What a relief it was for me when his train pulled out, for I knew that he would be quite safe from the Bolsheviks for some time at least!

When I made my first trip out to the sanatorium I was struck by the peace and quiet that reigned there. The people lived as in former times, dressed well, were gay and were even minded to flirt a bit. The sanatorium

building was a beautiful old manor of the eighteenth century.

Serge and I enjoyed everything like children, though we could not secure a room and had to sleep in a hay-loft. But the very first night, ten or fifteen minutes after I lay down, I felt something run across me. Lighting a match, I saw four large rats sitting there looking at me. Loathing the beasts, I immediately woke Serge and told him that I was leaving. He only exhibited surprise, lifted himself on his elbow, stared first at the rats and then at me, and said in quiet protest, 'My dear, but they are not Bolsheviks!' and dropped back on his side to go off to sleep.

Nevertheless, I left him, laughing at his apparent callousness and our changed estate, and refused thereafter to sleep in the loft, preferring a sofa in my mother's room.

One fine morning, when back in town, I received notice from the Cheka to the effect that my mother had to leave Moscow within three days. The Bolsheviks could hardly have afforded me a greater pleasure, for my mother was beginning to yield a little to our urgent protests against her remaining longer, and this gave us the last argument needed to move her. I planned more or less everything with X——, but found that it would take a long time to secure our passports. My mother and I could go as Ukrainian subjects, as all our principal estates were in the Ukraine; but for Serge's passport something had to be invented. I hurried to the sanatorium and ran to my mother.

'Look what you have received! We must all start for the south at once!' Then, determined to press at all points, I added: 'They are looking so sharply for Serge

that he must go away; but you know that he would never leave you here alone.'

At last my mother consented. I quite understood that it was a tragedy for her to leave Moscow and her sisters; but as for myself, I thought with delight of our departure and of the prospect of soon being able to rest mentally and physically without the constant fear for the safety of my husband and my mother.

'To rest as much as I want, and have no responsibility whatever!' was the happy thought that gave me peace and inspiration as I journeyed back to the city.

At last the Ukrainian passports for mother and myself were ready, and we had only to secure the Bolshevik passes and permits. One had, at that time, to run the gantlet of at least twelve Bolshevik institutions to certificate one's self for leaving Moscow and for avoiding arrest at the Ukrainian frontier.

At eight o'clock in the morning of the day on which I was to make my initial application for our papers, X—— rushed excitedly into our drawing-room.

'Do you know that the Bolsheviks are breaking into the safe-deposit boxes in the Crédit Lyonnais?'

'Impossible! Where have you heard this?'

'I called at the office this morning to let you know that I could not come to-day as usual, and found a note directing your mother or some one duly authorized by her to come to open her box and assist in making a list of its contents. If no one appears, they state that they will break it open immediately and confiscate all its contents.

'At what time must we be there?'

'At one o'clock to-day.'

'That will give me time to go to the sanatorium and secure the keys from mother.'

'You are not going to the Crédit Lyonnais yourself? It is a very big risk, you know,' thoughtfully observed X——, who hated to go near the Bolsheviks.

It certainly spelled a great risk for him, as the Reds were on his trail. I tried to persuade him not to go by assuring him that I should bring back a letter from my mother to the Director of the Bank, which would identify me as her daughter and authorize me to open the box.

'But I shall never let you go alone,' declared X——; 'I shall meet you here at twelve-thirty.'

I hurried out to the sanatorium for the keys and the letter and was back in time to meet X—— and set out with him, cautioning him as we went.

'In the Bank you must keep silent; make-believe you are simply accompanying me and do not disclose the fact that you are my mother's trustee. Above all, do not interrupt me, but leave me to answer all their questions.'

'Did you ask the Princess what the strong-box contains?'

'Yes. Mother said that there were some papers concerning our estates as well as some of my sister's diamonds. She does not know exactly what is there, as the box was last opened by my brother, and she thinks that he and his wife probably took most of my sister's jewels with them.'

'Well, let us hope that there are not many things in it, for I am sure they will take everything away.' X—— was always a pessimist.

When we arrived, the Director came to meet us. Our family had for years been clients of the Crédit Lyonnais and we were all well known there.

'Have you many valuables in your box?' he asked.

'I do not think so.'

'Be very careful with these gentlemen,' he advised cautiously. 'Whatever happens we can be of little or no practical help to you. They have put their seal upon everything.'

'Goodness me, they are burying me before I am dead with their gloomy state of mind!' I thought.

It seems unwarranted and boastful to confess the fact, but I was exhilarated and gay. A sense of sport was in me that filled me with a strong desire to beat the Bolsheviks in every possible way.

Down in the basement strong-room four of them stood with revolvers in their hands.

'Sit down here,' I whispered to X—— and almost pushed him behind a column, in the shadow of which he could remain unnoticed. 'Remember you are to keep silent now,' I reminded him.

The Director and I turned the two keys and, the moment the box was opened, the contents began to tumble out on the floor. I cannot to this day understand how my brother had been able to pack such a quantity of things into it! There seemed no end to them, as I transferred them to the table, one after the other, for inspection. In addition to the papers and to all the diamonds of one of my sisters, as well as part of those of my second sister and of my sister-in-law, there were cases containing ancient gold snuffboxes, watches covered with precious stones, and all sorts of trinkets from the Ukrainian estate of my eldest sister.

'And you said there was nothing in the box!' the Director whispered reproachfully.

'Let us begin with the papers,' said the Bolsheviks, who were standing near me all the time and were gazing with greedy eyes at what I was taking out.

'There are no papers of interest to you here, for they concern our estates, and, now that you have abolished all private property, they are of no use to you whatever,' I observed.

They looked at one another and hesitatingly replied:

'Well, it does appear so, but still we had better take them.'

'No, I shall not give them to you, for you do not really need them. We shall make a packet of them, seal it, and hand it over to the Director to keep, so that you and I shall be at peace about them.'

To my great relief they did not protest and allowed the Director to receive the precious packet.

'Well now, what about the jewels?' asked one of the Bolsheviks, who seemed to be the chief among them and who put the question with the air of a gourmand just sitting down to a feast, even rubbing his hands in delighted contemplation.

'We must warn you, madame, that you have the right to keep only thirty-two grammes of gold. The rest will be requisitioned by us, unless you desire to pay the tax on these valuables, in which case we shall put them back into the box and lock it in your presence; but the key must remain in our care, and you must give us the combination.'

'We shall certainly pay the tax,' I responded, realizing that the principal thing was to keep them from taking the jewels away; for we might still have a fighting chance of saving our things if they were left in the box.

'Let us first take out the articles that have no intrinsic value,' I proposed, and, grabbing up X——'s portfolio, I began throwing into it all the likely articles I could. 'These are not gold, but just plate,' I explained, as I tossed in snuffboxes and ash-trays and some watches which were in their leather cases.

'Just the same, they will take them from you, or we shall be robbed on our way home,' X—— whispered pessimistically.

His mood irritated me and made me laugh during that game for such high stakes which I was playing.

'Don't interfere, please,' I answered; 'I take all the responsibility on myself.'

He only shrugged his shoulders and accepted the overfilled portfolio on his knees. The Director, who seemed very much pleased at my success, quietly passed me a small canvas bag to enable me to lift more booty. I diverted the Bolsheviks from watching me in my minor operations by opening a case containing a beautiful diamond *rivière*, which belonged to one of my sisters and which held them in wondering contemplation. I had realized that it would be impossible to save the *rivière* itself, but I made up my mind to profit by their interest and the time they took to examine it to get hold of as many other things as I could. I had already quite a display of bracelets, brooches, etc., at the bottom of the sack when I decided to try to slip in also a long string of pearls; but I 'had no luck.' I had just taken it in my hands, when one of the Bolsheviks turned and saw me fingering it.

'What are you doing?' he cried, as they all came back to the table.

'I am just looking at it. It is my necklace,' I explained to him, ingenuously looking straight into his eyes. 'I should like to know the value you place upon it,' I continued, as I put the pearls down on the table.

They looked at me incredulously and did not leave the table again. The valuation of the remaining jewels then began and lasted through four long hours. During the process I noticed that one of the *Tovaristchi*, making-believe he was examining a big pearl set in a pendant, thrust it into his pocket. When I whispered this to the Director of the bank, he advised me: 'You had better not say a word, as it would only make them cross and they would simply take everything.'

From then on I began watching the *Tovaristchi* intently and, when I saw one of them fingering a gem a trifle too long, I immediately took the thing from him and put it back on the table. The tension of the struggle was severe, for I was alone against four of them, with X—— compelled to keep as silent as a fish behind his column.

At last the valuation came to an end without further pieces disappearing. You may judge of the sum we were called upon to pay from the fact that the *rivière* of diamonds was taxed two hundred fifty thousand roubles.

'We haven't so much money as that,' X—— telegraphed me in a whisper.

'Can't you see it does not matter? The essential thing is to gain time,' I assured him.

The jewels were put back in the box and locked up.

'Sign this paper, madame,' came from the Bolshevik chief.

'I must sign,' interrupted X——.

'No, I must do it on procuration,' I interposed to quiet

him and gave him a look of despair. He finally subsided. My plan was clear. I had no procuration whatever from my mother, so that my signature had no value. Before October, the date which had been fixed for the payment of the tax, the Bolsheviks would probably not raise the matter again, and we should have had time to get away to the south. They would then have to reopen the safe, and X—— would be able to delay this on the pretext that he had to communicate with my mother.

'And afterward,' I thought, 'God only knows what will happen!'

I signed the paper, but I did not want to give up the key.

'Will you please give me the combination of the box?'

'0–7–1,' I wrote down on a paper as the first figures that occurred to me and, remembering the fatal way the lady in the Cheka chattered, when thanking me so volubly for our help, I began to explain in a perfect stream of words how to open the box, inventing and confusing the details as much as possible. I talked for such a long time without allowing them to interrupt me that I tired them and drove three of them away. The chief remained, but was so exasperated and irritated that he began gesticulating in protest to my flow of words. Meantime the Director and X—— were watching me, not knowing exactly what had happened to my mental condition.

'Oh, please stop!' the *Tovaristch* finally cried in despair, covering his ears with his hands. 'Women are strange beings. Where on earth do they get so many words?' He turned for sympathy toward his fellow-men, X—— and the Director. He paid me a higher compliment than I deserved, for I was really out of breath.

'Now give me the key,' he continued.

'The key?' I tried to look as surprised as possible. 'But I gave it long ago to one of your companions.'

'Which one?'

'I really do not remember. Well, so you won't forget — one has to put the key into the key-hole and then . . .' I began the explanations once more at the same pace.

Even X—— gave a sigh.

'For goodness' sake, enough! I understand, I understand. Good-bye!' cried the Bolshevik as he hurried through the door.

It is difficult to say exactly what happened to me when he disappeared, for I nearly collapsed with what was apparently hysterical laughter. X——, worried and amazed, seized me firmly by the arm, thinking, no doubt, I had hysterics.

'What is the matter? Why are you laughing so?'

'Let us hurry home,' I urged; and, picking up the bag, made a quick exit with him out of the Bank to find a drosky. As we took leave of the Director, I noticed with wicked delight the glances which he and X—— exchanged and which said as clearly as words: 'Poor creature, she has gone mad!'

'How are you feeling?' X—— anxiously inquired, after we were seated in the drosky.

'Splendid, thank you.'

'What was the matter with you?' he finally risked asking me, seeing that I was now quite composed.

'You wish to know why I laughed so heartily? That is why,' and I opened my hand, in the palm of which rested the key to the safe-deposit box.

'What is that?'

'The key. I suppose you are not blind.'

'Then you did not give it to them?'

'What sort of a daughter do you think I am? Did you expect me to help the Bolsheviks rob mother?'

'So that is the reason why you were making such a . . .' he hesitated, 'of yourself.'

'Let us admit that you thought I had become quite an idiot!' And then, for the first time through all this depressing period, I saw the melancholy X—— rock from side to side with laughter. In my turn I began to be a bit afraid for his reason.

## CHAPTER XI

### PERJURY, THE SINGLE PRICE OF LIBERTY

'WHAT are you doing to-morrow?' came from X——, as we were parting.

So fatigued by the tension of the day that I could scarcely stand on my feet, I put little enthusiasm into my answer that I was beginning the round of all the Bolshevik institutions to secure our passports.

'With whom are you going?'

'Alone, of course.'

'Oh, I cannot allow you to go alone! I shall certainly tell Mr. Nicholas to go with you.'

Though I was accustomed to obeying X—— in most things, I rebelled at this and became cross, for Mr. Nicholas, our secretary, was a coward such as the world has seldom seen. The poor man soon proved this himself by going mad from his terrible dread of the Bolsheviks and had to be taken to a lunatic asylum.

'I wonder what you will invent for me next! It is not at all pleasant to go to these places, and yet you want me to haul about with me this hysterical man.'

'If you so prefer, I shall go with you,' he persisted obstinately.

I knew that it was very dangerous for him to appear in these institutions, which none of our group, except myself, who was of no particular interest to the Bolsheviks, could visit without the risk of getting into trouble. Also the thought of having him constantly at my heels and of his persistent attempts to keep me back and hinder

me in his fear that I should run too great risks, decided me immediately.

'Well, let Mr. Nicholas come.'

At eight o'clock the next morning the secretary knocked at my door and reported that he was there, by order of Mr. X——, to be at my disposal. We went through a few of the less important Commissariats and parted toward evening. I was quite in a temper; for Mr. Nicholas, probably obeying the orders of X——, had followed me step by step, always refusing my suggestion that he remain outside on a bench in the street and wait for me. The color of his face, as we threaded these institutions, reminded me of green grapes, while throughout the whole day he shook like a mould of jelly on a dish.

'You know this is no fun for me,' I said to X——, when I met him the next morning.

'At any rate, I am not worried about you when Nicholas is along,' he answered. Some men are wonderful egoists!

There were only two of the Commissar's offices where I had to go which I rather feared on account of my mother's trouble over the sugar. The first was the militia station of our section, from which I had to secure a paper stating that my mother and I had not been under judicial investigation; while the second was the office for political and speculation cases, where we had to contrive in some way to obtain a certificate stating that we were not under suspicion. Luckily I bethought myself of Mr. Slavin, president of our house committee, who I felt sure must have close relations with the former. Meeting him on the stairs, I broached the matter.

'Oh, certainly. I know a lot of people in the militia

station,' he declared proudly, 'and I shall see to the matter this afternoon and go there with you to-morrow.'

The following morning I sent Mr. Nicholas away, telling him I would not need him. At about eleven o'clock Slavin came in.

'Will you come with me now? You must give the man to whom I shall introduce you the names and ages of your mother and yourself and tell him that, as you have no time to wait, he must bring the papers to you this evening.'

'But why? I have nothing to do to-day and can just as well wait there.'

'Oh, how naïve you are!' Slavin responded with a pitying smile on his face. 'You must give him some money for his trouble and you cannot do it in the office — everybody would see you!'

'But I have never given a bribe to any one. What if he is offended?'

'Don't worry. He will not be, for he is already prepared.'

'And how much must I give him?'

'Two hundred roubles. It is an understood tax they have there, one hundred roubles for each person. I shall be with him when he comes to see you this evening. And your husband is not going?' he asked casually, as if taking no particular interest in the question.

'No, he is remaining, as he has his business here,' I answered with equal indifference and changed the subject.

It was a game of cat and mouse. Slavin hated Serge; and I knew that, though he was really helping my mother and me to get away, he would do everything he could to have my husband arrested.

We started out together. The small, dirty rooms of the Commissariat were full of people.

'I need a certificate,' I said to the man pointed out to me by Slavin, who himself did not enter the room, but remained hiding behind the door so that he could disappear unobserved in case of my failure.

'In what name?'

I gave the names.

'So,' he said and looked me over from head to foot. 'I cannot give it to you now, as the Commissar has gone out for his dinner.'

'I cannot wait. Perhaps you would bring it to me this evening? I should be obliged if you would,' I added in a low voice.

'All right. I shall come at seven o'clock.'

'Let me give you my address.'

'No, I know it,' he interrupted hurriedly.

Throughout the whole day I was very much excited and could not keep still, wondering all the time whether he would really bring the coveted document or not. At six o'clock I went down to my rooms and waited. At half-past seven, when I had already begun to despair, the bell rang and Slavin, with his friend, entered the room.

'Here is the paper in perfect order.'

Never had I felt so ill at ease as then.

'How odious!' I thought as I crumpled the two hundred-rouble notes in my hand.

Both the men sat down, but conversation did not progress. While I was absorbed with the thought of how to get rid of them, Slavin seemed to sense my discomfort and rose to take his leave.

'I must also go,' said the Bolshevik, reaching out his hand toward me to shake hands.

I thrust the money into his palm and, quite unconsciously, wiped my hand on the curtain near which I was standing. The man looked at me fiercely and walked out.

'How strange you are! One can see that you are not accustomed to it,' Slavin whispered pityingly, as he followed his friend through the door.

It sickened me, but still another step toward our departure had been made.

All this time I was very anxious about Serge. He could not go with us as a Ukrainian subject, inasmuch as he had no connections with the Ukraine. I began to make inquiries and at last found a man who, for a big sum of money, promised to arrange false passports to get him safely over the frontier.

'But for this purpose I need a certificate with any sort of stamp whatever on it, ordering your husband to the south of Russia on some definite business,' he stipulated as his one condition.

'All right, I shall bring it to you,' I answered.

'I shall require about ten days to complete all the arrangements, so please make haste,' he added.

Next morning I entered the study, where X—— was waiting for me as usual.

'I need a paper immediately from our office stating that Serge is being sent to our estates in the South to pay the workmen,' I announced, without any preliminaries.

'Wha-a-t!' he ejaculated, as he jumped up. 'I shall never give you such a thing!'

'Why?'

'Because if he is arrested both your mother and you will have to answer for it.'

'That is all very well; but I must have this paper with

the office seal on it, so please be kind enough to give the necessary instructions to have it made out for me immediately.'

'No.'

'No? Then I will arrange matters in another way,' and I went out.

I knew that X—— was obstinate to the last degree, but I also knew that he was terribly anxious about me and was sure I was risking too much with the Bolsheviks. I was not mistaken. In half an hour our butler appeared with a note from X—— begging me to come directly to the office.

'You do not need this paper at all,' he began the moment I arrived.

'Have you made me come here only to tell me this?' I interrupted. 'Then it were better for me to go.'

'But I will not give you the paper,' he persisted, suddenly firing up.

'You will not? You say you will not?'

His last words had angered me in turn. Taking out of my portfolio all the papers and permits which I had assembled with so much difficulty during the last six weeks, I folded them accurately and made a gesture as if to tear them up.

'What are you doing?' X—— cried, grasping me by the hand.

'I am going to tear up all these.'

'Why?'

'Because Serge will not be able to go without your paper, and I shall not leave him. Mother will be only too pleased to remain in Moscow. You know that as well as I do.'

X——'s face gradually cleared.

'You have a disposition just as stubborn as mine. It is more difficult to deal with you than with the Bolsheviks: one *can* persuade them sometimes!'

The result of our tilt was that the paper was brought to me in ten minutes. At heart X—— was really most solicitous for us and remained always a faithful friend.

As Serge's departure was drawing near, I arranged for him to come into town about three days before the time to leave.

'It is dreadful to go away and leave you here,' he protested.

'Although our train starts five days after yours, we shall probably be in Kieff before you,' I persuaded him.

All our papers were ready except that from the Commissariat 'for political cases,' the place which I dreaded the most. Mr. Nicholas constantly postponed this visit, giving all sorts of excuses. I made up my mind to have this over with before Serge's departure and declared that I should go alone, if Mr. Nicholas declined to accompany me.

'Oh, I must go, or Mr. X—— will be terribly cross with me,' he sighed.

I made no mention of all this to Serge, who was providentially very busy with the liquidation of his garage. As Serge's character was exactly the opposite to that of Mr. Nicholas, I should have chosen any one but him to follow and 'protect' me. 'As far as possible from any guard,' was my motto of those days, and I particularly did not desire a guard whom the Bolsheviks would have loved to catch.

The Commissariat was located in one of the prisons of

Moscow. Seeing a crowd before the door as we arrived, Mr. Nicholas suggested that we should stand in line and take our turn.

'Oh, yes, please do stand there,' I answered in complete accord. 'You keep my place while I look around and make some inquiries.'

It happened that I had in my possession a certain paper, issued by the Bolshevik Red Cross, which had been given me during the winter by a friend and which granted me admission into nearly all the Soviet institutions and prisons. I had attached little importance to the document and even laughed about it, maintaining that the Bolsheviks would not arrest me while I had it and would have to go so far as to help me, if I needed it. Once, when Serge and I were examining his papers before his departure for the sanatorium, I had run across it and had thrust it into my portfolio.

I went up to the door leading to the office. Near it stood a sentinel.

'You cannot enter,' he snapped out as he stopped me. 'You must wait your turn.'

'I have a pass,' I remonstrated, remembering the Red Cross paper.

He looked intently at the Soviet seal and, obviously without having read the contents of the document, opened the door and let me enter, paying little heed to the displeasure of the long line that was waiting to get in.

At first I was not able to see anything, for the room was terribly dark, owing to the closely woven, dust-covered wire netting that screened the windows.

Along the wall stood ten or twelve tables with men sitting behind them writing. At the opposite end I made

out a sort of iron cage, into which the prisoners were brought from the cells to speak to the relatives or friends who had secured permission to visit them. The whole atmosphere of the place was threatening and gloomy.

'Where are the certificates of political loyalty given out?' I asked.

'Table No. 3.'

As I approached it I found four people already waiting to receive papers for their departure.

'You are forbidden to leave Moscow,' the man said to three of them, while he issued a certificate only to the fourth, an old woman of about seventy years of age.

'What if mother's name is on their lists?' I thought with a shudder. 'How shall I ever be able to take her away if they withhold this permission!'

To take the risk and cross the frontier secretly was possible for Serge and myself, but quite unthinkable for my mother, owing to the state of her health.

'What do you want?' the man finally asked of me.

'I want a certificate for Princess M—— and for myself,' I answered.

My heart was beating so loudly that it seemed to me the man would hear it. This was the last step to take and, if it did not succeed, all would be lost, so that for a long time we should not be able to leave the Soviet Paradise.

My mother's name and my married name began with the same letter, but mine came first in alphabetical order. There were hundreds of names beginning with M, and I bent down to help him look over the list. Suddenly I was struck as by lightning, for there was my mother's name with a notice following it in red ink in another hand, reading:

'Arrested for speculation in sugar. Fine paid. To be watched.'

It was quite evident they would not grant permission for mother to go. I had just heard for what senseless reasons they had refused it to the people who applied before me.

'You are not on the list. I shall give you the certificate at once.' Then he wrote: 'Citizen M—— is not on the list of those suspected of political or other disloyalty.'

'You have forgotten to mention my mother,' I said.

'Nor her mother,' he inserted after my name; then suddenly, as if waking up, queried: 'Why do you think your mother is not on the list?'

'Because I looked through the names while you were writing. Look for yourself,' I answered, feeling hot and cold all over.

He bent down over his big book. I followed his movement and, as if by accident, put my hand with my umbrella in it over the upper line, where my mother's name stood in startlingly large letters.

'I do not find anything,' he said, at which a sigh of relief nearly broke from me.

The document was completed with the final entry, 'Departure from Soviet Russia is permitted,' and was then duly signed and sealed. We were free at last! Never during those months of trial had I felt so lighthearted and hopeful as on that day.

Mr. Nicholas was quite upset when I drew him out of the line and told him what I had done.

'What will Mr. X—— say when he hears that you went in there alone?' he kept repeating.

'Nothing — if he never hears it,' I assured him.

Now all our papers were in perfect order, and we had only to wait for the train, which was specially made up for Ukrainian subjects and which was due about August 25th.

On the 21st, Serge went away. It was our first parting for any length of time since our marriage, so that I felt terribly lonely as I came back into our rooms after seeing him off. I did not go to the station with him, as that was one of the conditions made by the man who undertook to engineer his departure and who told me that I could have news of him in about three days, but that I must not come for it myself, as the suspicions of the authorities might be aroused. How impossible and unreal that atmosphere of conspiracy and deceit, in which we lived in 1918, now seems! Yet at the time it was an instinctive part of our life and was accepted by everybody as quite natural.

Of course our train did not arrive on the 25th. It had been detained in Petrograd on account of some formalities and would arrive at Moscow in three days; at least that was the information we received. All our things were packed, and we had already said good-bye to everybody about ten times. Dunia and my mother's maid were to follow us to the Crimea in a week or two. Again our train did not come on the scheduled date, and the waiting was growing quite unbearable.

'Well, and your husband has apparently gone,' Slavin remarked one day, as he met me on the stairs.

'Yes, he has gone, having decided at the last moment,' I answered as blandly as I could, though I was disturbed to see the cunning smile on the man's face.

I did not know at the time that this scoundrel, having

heard from the concierge about Serge's departure, had joined with a Commissar in telegraphing the Cheka at Kursk to arrest Serge at that station. It was quite by a miracle that Serge was able to escape from prison the very night he was caught. I sent Mr. Nicholas repeatedly to the man who had undertaken to assist in my husband's escape. Finally he came back with the news that Serge was reported safely over the frontier. Dissatisfied with the meager character of the information received through Mr. Nicholas, I declared my intention of going myself to learn more details.

'He begs you not to come, for he has heard that you are watched and fears that your presence at his place might handicap his efforts for other officers.'

'What nonsense! I have never been watched,' I protested, feeling a dreadful anxiety for Serge.

Just a few days ago, here in our peaceful little French village, I read over a letter to Serge at Kieff which I had written during these days in Moscow. What a state of mind I was in throughout all this period! I did not hide it as usual from Serge, for he was in safety. I tried only to reassure him about our delayed departure, as I was afraid he would grow so anxious about us that he might attempt to return to Moscow. I lived as on burning coal at the thought that he might not receive my communications in time to stop him, for all letters were opened by the Bolsheviks, so that one could never be sure they would travel farther than some Commissar's desk in Moscow.

## CHAPTER XII

### ON THE TRAIL OF WHITE BREAD AND CAKES

FINALLY, on September 3d, after saying our last good-byes to every one, we drove to the station. The train was to start at eight o'clock in the evening; but, on arriving at the railway, we were told that it would be 'a little late.' Mr. Nicholas, who was delegated to see us off, fussed terribly and constantly kept running to us with news full of panic. I should explain that there had been an attempt to murder Lenin on the 1st or 2d of September and that he had been severely wounded. As a result of this the Red terror in Moscow had reached unparalleled savagery, and we feared that the Bolsheviks would not allow the train to leave for a long time yet.

The clock struck nine, then ten, and still we sat in the station, waiting for permission to take our places.

'The train will not start to-night,' was Mr. Nicholas' next contribution to our evening's entertainment, 'for the Soviets have refused to put the visas on the passports. They suspect that the man who made the attempt on Lenin may be among the passengers. I shall go and find out all the details.'

Mother and I sat there quite calmly for a long time. In Soviet Russia every one grows accustomed to waiting.

'The train will start in half an hour,' burst in Mr. Nicholas. 'The Bolsheviks have given their permission. But you will leave without the passports, which will be sent on to Orsha.' He stopped for a moment. 'Tell me,

please, have you brought with you your silver and gold articles?'

'Certainly.'

'They will take them away from you,' he declared.

'I do not want to leave them behind,' answered my mother. 'If they seize them, I shall not protest; but still I prefer to take the risk.'

However, we finally decided to give the largest of the articles to one of Serge's chauffeur associates to bury for us, and we kept only the smallest in our bags. On the way to the car we were stopped three times for examination of our papers, but at last reached our places. Everything looked rather clean. A first-class compartment for two people — what better could one desire?

'Excuse me if I put two more ladies in with you,' came as a disturbing shock from the commandant of the train the moment we were seated.

Luckily for us, they turned out to be one of our friends and her maid. My mother remained in the lower berth, while our friend took the upper one and proposed sharing it with me; but the moment she went out into the corridor, her maid whispered in my ear: 'Don't accept. She kicks terribly in her sleep!'

Although our entry into the train, cutting us off as it were from the interference of the Bolsheviks and carrying us back into familiar surroundings of former days, had combined with our departure to give me a greatly relieved and almost buoyant frame of mind, I felt little disposed to take the risk of being hurtled out of an upper berth, and so arranged a makeshift bed on the floor with several handbags as the best substitutes available for mattress and springs. Midnight came, and we had not yet moved.

This time we were delayed by the examination of the luggage, which was more 'thorough' than any traveler outside Soviet Russia has ever experienced. They usually appropriated all valuables, dresses, and linen, leaving only one change of underclothing, one extra pair of boots, and one extra dress for each person. But they did not touch any of our things, merely opening the cases and locking them again for appearance' sake — a leniency due entirely to the fact that their severity had been tempered by two hundred roubles from myself and five hundred more from the frightened Mr. Nicholas.

The train was still in the station when we went to sleep. The next morning we should have been halfway to the Ukrainian frontier. At about seven o'clock I was awakened by the noise of shouting outside and discovered that we had pulled into a small station.

'Where are we?' I asked one of the passengers.

'In Kunzovo.'

'What!' (Kunzovo is about seven miles from Moscow.) 'Does any one know what the commotion is all about?'

'We started without our passports, as you probably know, also without the written permission of the Moscow Soviets; and now we are being stopped by the Kunzovo Soviets, who are holding us up on this pretext to give them also a chance to rob the passengers.'

Frightened faces peeped out of all the compartments. Nearly the whole car was full of acquaintances, and they were communicating to each other where and how they had hidden their jewels, money, and other valuables.

'My diamonds are sewn in my buttons,' one lady whispered to me, 'and my daughter has her pearls hidden in

the trimming of her hat. Do you think they will be able to find them?'

'Can you give me a cigarette?' asked a gentleman, seeing I had my cigarette-case in my hand.

'Certainly, but what have you under your arm?' I remarked, noticing that he was holding there a box of two hundred and fifty cigarettes.

'Come and see,' he answered, drawing me into his compartment and closing the door. In every cigarette a forty-rouble bank-note was hidden, which was the all-sufficient reason for not smoking one of his own supply during the whole journey.

Another gentleman, who was exceptionally lazy and hated to move from his place, always proposed going for a walk just as soon as a search began. He did not, however, go far; in fact only a few steps from the car before flopping down in the grass near the railway. We could not understand why he did this, as he had never been a coward. Later, when we were all safe in the Ukraine, he explained to us that he had hidden a string of pearls in his tooth-powder box and, while he lay on the grass, was burying it in the ground until the search was over and he could safely disinter it and come back.

It was impossible to say what valuables each one of us was carrying. Mother had brought all her diamonds with her, and I had mine. We played a regular game in hiding them. Whenever a search threatened, mother would lie down with our jewels pinned under her dress. When the *Tovaristchi* came to our compartment, I begged them not to disturb mother, as she was ill and as all the passes and permits were in my hands. Moreover, I took all the handbags into the corridor for examination, so that the trick succeeded every time.

It was only on the fourth day out that we arrived at Orsha. The station and the town were divided into two parts, Soviet Orsha and Ukrainian Orsha, the latter of which was occupied by the Germans. In Soviet Orsha our train was held up for six hours, as our passports had not yet arrived, and we were even threatened with being arrested or, worse still, with being sent back to Moscow.

At last, however, our documents came, after which the Bolsheviks began to examine in greatest detail everything and everybody, always with the hope of finding some of the many officers who were running away from Soviet Russia to join the Volunteer Army. I recognized a few officers among our fellow passengers, though they were well disguised and certainly must have had false papers, so that I had to pretend I did not know them. The train was surrounded and no one allowed to leave it, not even the lazy man with the tooth-powder. Three Bolsheviks of awful appearance, in torn and dirty clothes, stood over our opened bags and rummaged through our linen for full half an hour.

At last the friend in our compartment lost her temper and burst out to me in French: '*Quelle horreur! Cet homme fourre ses mains sales dans mon linge propre!*'

'*Pardon, madame, mes mains sont plus propres que les vôtres!*' the fellow answered in perfect French; and he was right, as we had had no water with which to wash for the last two days. The woman was dumbfounded; for, of course, she could never have guessed that the man would know French. It turned out that he had been a customs official in Wirballen.

At last we heard the *chef de train* utter a short sentence that was fraught with more significance and hope, it

seemed to me, than any similar group of words I had heard in my life. It was simply:

'The train is going to start in a moment.'

Somewhere during the next ten minutes we passed over the boundary between Red Russia and the Ukraine, out of one great life of all that we had known of happiness and comfort, followed by torture, into a future foreign, and unknowable, but welcome beyond the power of words to tell, because of its relief from the fear, strain, and duplicity of the months just past. After its short run, the train stopped again in the Ukrainian suburb of Orsha. The frontier was passed, and everybody made the sign of the cross.

A moment later we saw German officers and soldiers entering the coaches. I must confess that it was awfully painful to see them masters in our own country; even so, I experienced a definite feeling of thankfulness to them for the sense of safety and repose which their presence brought to me. To our surprise, however, their first act was to arrest the disguised officers whom I had previously marked among the passengers.

'We are acting on a telegram from Moscow,' one of the Germans explained in answer to our questions.

While we were still wondering whether they would hand them over to the Bolsheviks, we saw the officers coming back.

'If we had remained ten minutes longer in Soviet Orsha we should all be sitting in the Cheka by now,' they explained to us. 'A telegram from Moscow with orders to arrest us all was received five minutes after the train pulled out. The Germans have naturally set us free.'

That was luck, just pure and wonderful luck!

For some unexplained reason the train remained three long days there in Orsha. During two whole weeks I had had no word from Serge and was consequently tortured by anxiety. Moreover, private telegrams were not permitted in Orsha, so that I could not let him know that we had at last started toward him. Brooding over Slavin's hatred of Serge and his knowledge that he had slipped away, I began to conjure up the most dreadful possibilities. I did my best to regain control and bring myself back in hand, walking about Orsha for hours under the pretense of looking for suitable food for my mother, who was showing perceptibly the effects of the long strain. All our provisions had come to an end, and at the station one could find only milk, buns, and horrible sausages, made from everything imaginable except pork. Orsha is more of a village than a town and afforded so little choice that the only thing I was able to ferret out was a live fowl, which one of the men killed for me, though I had to pluck it myself. From it I made some very welcome soup for my mother.

It was only on the evening of the third day that we started again, after the German Sanitary Commission had examined our certificates of vaccination for smallpox and of inoculation against cholera, typhoid fever, and many other illnesses. Early the next morning I heard some one knocking and calling outside our door:

'Come quickly!'

'Where? I am not ready to go anywhere yet.'

'We are in Gomel, didn't you know it?'

I peeped through the door and saw two of my young girl acquaintances standing in the corridor fidgeting with impatience.

'What is the matter with you?'

'Be quick! The town is full of sugar and sweetmeats. We shall wait for you, if you hurry.'

I confess that I did not make them wait long, for I took but a moment to dress before joining them outside the car. Practically the whole trainload of passengers was in the act of storming the town. Only after having lived in Soviet Russia, as we had, could one appreciate what the absence of sugar, white bread, and other staple elements in the diet means.

The passengers were dispersing in different directions as we entered the town. I suppose they all felt quite as we did, as we hurried along. It seemed to us that we wanted to eat all the white bread and everything sweet we could find, at the same time harboring a certain shame for our greediness. We had to continue on to the farther end of the town, inasmuch as all the cakes in the centrally located shops had been or were in the process of being devoured by groups of passengers at whom we peered through the windows with envy and some malice. As we pressed on, one of the girls at last gave a cry of mingled joy and relief on discovering a small, shabby-looking bakery with fresh cakes in the window. I should probably suppress any record of the fact that I ate seventeen of these cakes, and that without shame, if it were not that the sixty-year-old French governess of my two companions disposed of twenty-three — and the cakes were not small at that! Gomel is itself a dirty, unattractive town, to which I doubt very much that I shall ever return; yet how I love it for the memory of its cakes!

Taking with us all sorts of provisions for my mother, we ran back, as we were told that the train would not

stop for more than an hour and a half. It turned out, however, that we did not leave for five hours, owing to the fact that there were so many trains of refugees coming from Soviet Russia that we had to await our turn.

Finally the last night of this unbearably tedious journey drew its blanket over us. I could not sleep, for the thought of whether I should or should not find Serge in Kieff was torturing me. As we finally rolled into the city, we were once more held up at the freight station. I nearly cried when I was told that our train was to be run into a siding and that no one could leave it for several hours more, while the examination of the luggage was taking place. As I stood gazing idly out of the window, while they were shunting our train back and forth, I suddenly spied Serge perched on the steps of an empty freight car, leaning over toward our train and peering into each window.

'Here we are!' I cried out to him, and then rushed into our compartment and closed the door.

There had been so much anxiety for the last few days that, at the sight of my husband, I suddenly had such a *détente des nerfs* that I felt I was going to cry — and I hate that. I woke up to find myself standing in the middle of the compartment, crossing myself mechanically and feeling that my head was empty of thoughts.

Serge quickly appeared and made arrangements with the commandant of the train to take my mother and myself to the hotel, leaving our luggage behind. After we had sent up to my mother's room everything she needed, Serge and I went into the restaurant and ordered our morning coffee.

'Do you know what happened to me?' said Serge, after

I had told him everything about our own experiences. 'I was arrested as a result of a telegram from Moscow, taken to the Cheka in Kursk and was to have been sent back on the following day.'

I confess that I exhibited at that moment far from my natural interest in the adventures he had gone through. I was taken up with the thought of being once more with him in normal surroundings, sitting in a well-appointed restaurant, drinking real coffee, which was not made from burned nuts or watermelon seeds, as it was in Moscow, and — what was best of all — eating white bread with as much butter as I wanted.

## CHAPTER XIII

### A HEALTH RESORT IN THE CRIMEA

We immediately began to make the necessary arrangements for our journey to the Crimea. We were off the very next day for Odessa in a splendid train, in which everything was as clean and as orderly as before the Revolution.

I presume that people who have lived a long time among savages must experience the same feeling when returning to civilization. We were as happy as children at the sight of electric lamps on the table of a restaurant car, over the dapper, clean uniforms of the railway employees, and with the speed of the train.

Three days later the ship we had taken in Odessa was approaching Yalta, where we were to meet my sister and her family, whom we had not seen for over a year and had often feared we should never see again. It is useless to attempt to describe our meeting.

They took us along to the estate by the sea which was then their home, and we lived as in a dream during those first days of freedom and normal surroundings. I cannot even remember what we did. I recall only that mother was very ill, for the journey and the complete nervous relaxation following it had a serious effect on her. One could not be surprised at this, as mother certainly felt everything that was happening more acutely than we did, but, in spite of this, always kept herself well in hand and never revealed the depth of her feelings while she was passing through those trying days. She seemed as

quiet and calm as she was in the old and happy life before the disasters of war and revolution swept down upon us. But we all knew how intense was her suffering at the sight of the peril of our country. Even to-day, when she sometimes sees one of us agitated and fussing about something, she says calmly, '*Tout cela n'est qu'un drame!*' — a phrase that never fails to give me heart and some of her wonderful courage.

Life in Yalta seemed a veritable heaven to us. Here the people one met were normal, while in Moscow every one looked at all the affairs of life from the viewpoint of a madman. Moreover, the horrible state of half-hunger was unknown in Yalta, as the town was full of provisions and everything was about twenty-five times cheaper than in Moscow. In addition we had as much money as we required, since our estates in the Governments of Kherson and Don had been returned to us as a result of the German occupation.

But this state of calmness did not last long, for me at least. After about a month or six weeks of such a refreshingly normal existence, Serge became daily more restive from idleness, and I, on my part, naturally began to worry at seeing him so disturbed and tried to help him find some occupation.

Revolution was brewing in Germany, and one fine day it became known that the Germans were evacuating the Ukraine and were planning to leave all their ammunition to the Professional Unions, which were made up exclusively of Bolsheviks. It is difficult to describe the commotion which this news caused among the many officers from the Volunteer Army who had come to the Crimea to recover from illness and wounds. Under its

sting Serge rushed about the town like a madman and finally was able, with several officer friends, to secure possession of the ammunition, to the great wrath of the Professional Unions and the German soldiers, who had become more or less Bolshevik as soon as they had learned about the revolution in their own country.

I felt sure that a period of anxiety, probably equal to the Orenburg one, was ahead for me, yet I seemed to have no fear of it. During our life in Moscow I had become accustomed to the worst and had been forcibly taught to rely entirely on my own powers; to compel myself to be calm and not to think about the things that were torturing me; for through it all I knew that Serge was but doing his duty. Here, in Yalta, ignoring his attempt to dissuade me, I decided to take an active part in the work for the Volunteer Army. It occupied much of my time and gave me a certain distraction.

With this in mind, I took upon myself to watch out for the welfare of the so-called Port Section, which had been collected and organized by Serge and which later became famous in Yalta. It was composed almost entirely of young invalided officers, who illustrated clearly the new type of man that had developed under the trying conditions of Bolshevism. All of them had served in either or both the Imperial and Volunteer armies and were now living in Yalta because they were incapacitated for active service at the front. Many of them had been materially ruined by the Bolsheviks, while almost every one had lost some member of his family during the Revolution. I remember most clearly how one of them told me of the tragedies in their lives.

'I saw my mother killed before my very eyes — the

Bolsheviks had brought me into the room to see it. Misha had his two young brothers shot. Andrei's father and twelve-year-old sister were tortured to death to make them tell where he himself was hiding at the time. And if you only knew how they were tortured! I won't tell it to you, though, for the Major would be cross with me if he knew I had given you the details. And after all this, how can you expect us to be as normal as our fathers were at our age? Did they see and live through such horrors when they were boys? What is more, if the Bolsheviks act like wild animals, you cannot expect us to remain meek lambs, for that would simply be stupid and fatal for us.'

They certainly were not 'meek' and were much farther from being 'lambs,' yet what fine fellows they really were! Nearly all of them were only boys of from twenty to twenty-two years of age, generally as candid and gay as children up to the moment when they thought they could somewhere or somehow put a Bolshevik out of the way. Then they showed the wild beast in them. And these were the men that guarded the port from the machinations of the local Bolsheviks, examined the ships which entered the harbor and in general maintained order throughout the town.

In this more or less agitated way our life continued until December, with the Turkish men-of-war Goeben and Breslau occasionally bombarding the town to add to the excitement and danger. Their visits necessitated all the streets of the town being darkened at night and all the windows facing the sea being equipped with special shutters to cut off the light.

We were living at this time with mother in a villa not

far from the quay. Already people began to discuss the reverses of the White forces at the Bolshevik front, the retreat of the Volunteer Army, and the possible evacuation of the Crimea, in view of the fact that our troops were withdrawing in the direction of Novorossisk. The local Bolsheviks were beginning to raise their heads, and it was several times reported to Serge that they were holding secret meetings. As a result of his activities against them at this time, all the doubtful characters in the town knew him well by sight, hated him, and gave him the nickname of the 'White Devil,' which has clung to him ever since. Serge always wore a black *tcherkess* (coat), a big white *papakha*, or cap, and a sort of Caucasian cowl, called a *bashlik*, hanging down his back. Although every Bolshevik in town knew this costume, he persisted in wearing it in spite of all my remonstrances.

It was at about this time that Serge was on duty during the first half of the night, so that he used to come home around three o'clock in the morning. As our room was on the ground floor, he generally climbed up and came in through the window, in order not to waken any one in the house.

On one of these nights I had already been in bed for a long time, but, for some reason, could not get to sleep. With a strange feeling, almost a premonition, that something was about to happen, I lay tensely listening to every sound that came from within and without the house. Suddenly I heard footsteps approaching our villa and then the sound of some one running, as though in pursuit of another. There followed in rapid succession a shot, a cry right under my open window, the quick cadence of retreating steps, a few groans, and a silence that clutched me with fear.

'It is Serge!' was the only thought in my mind. Grabbing my dressing-gown, I climbed out of the window, bent over the man lying there, and struck a match. . . . An unknown, bearded face printed itself forever on my sensitive, overwrought mind and then disappeared, as the match went out. I placed my ear to the man's heart and found that he was still alive. Just as I was rising to go to telephone Serge, I heard running toward us a number of men, who fortunately turned out to be a patrol from the Port Section, coming to investigate the shot. In response to my cries, they came and lifted the wounded man, whom they identified as an officer of the Volunteer Army, and at once carried him to the hospital, where the poor fellow died before seeing the light of another day. Who had shot him was never discovered, nor was it ever known whether the bullet was meant for him or not; but it was clear that the crime had not been committed for the purpose of robbery, as nothing had been taken from him.

Many times since those days have I given silent thanks that five months later, after all those frights and trying experiences, my little daughter was born a normal child. After this particular scare I was naturally rather nervous for some time and insisted on Serge coming home early or staying at the Port Section for the night.

'It is strange how you get frightened over nothing,' he remonstrated. He had once more passed beyond the horizon of normal life so that, in that Atlantis of horror and strife, the most unusual happenings seemed to him quite ordinary and everything was viewed by him from a reckless, abnormal angle.

'*Yemu morye po kolyena.*' These words of the Russian

proverb came frequently to my mind, as I thought that really 'He defies the sea to drown him.'

But the odd feature of it all was that he expected me to look upon these events around us in the same way that he did, and was quite surprised, or even vexed, when he occasionally found that I could not do it, or went farther and entertained my own independent opinion about them.

On one occasion he announced to me with an expression of evident pleasure:

'You know to-morrow, New Year's Day, the Bolsheviks have decided to make an armed demonstration.'

'Well, what are you so happy about?'

'Now, really you *are* strange' — he was looking at me with pity. 'Perhaps it is better to warn you or you will again become anxious. Don't be frightened if you hear some shooting early in the morning.'

'What will it be?'

'Oh, nothing exceptional or abnormal. Don't get fidgety.'

'You know, there is positively something wrong about you! Shooting in the midst of a town full of people, and you say "there is nothing abnormal about it." Are you not going mad?' — and I looked doubtfully at his radiant face.

'Well, of course we may come into collision with the Bolsheviks, who have gathered here in increasingly threatening numbers. But please don't be nervous about it.'

'You crazy man!' I just had time to call after him, as he ran out of the room, taking with him all the revolver cartridges he had.

'If I only knew what is going to happen,' I thought.

I was terribly vexed with this incomprehensible manner of calming me which only made me twice as anxious about him.

I went to bed, but could not sleep. As usual, the stillness of the night gradually brought with it a state of anxiety for which the excitement-filled days left little place. By four o'clock it became so unbearable that I dressed and went out into the street, where the thick fog that was rolling in from the sea shrouded the town in an uncanny darkness. Through it I made my way out to the quay, where I sat down on a bench within sight of the quarters of the Port Section. In the loneliness of the night there was something unnerving and foreboding in the sound of the waves pounding against the stones. After I had sat there for a long time and had just made up my mind to go back home, I heard a distant shot, then a second and a third, and immediately afterward the nearer rattle of machine guns mingled with rifle volleys. The damp air seemed charged to the breaking-point with these reverberations. The windows of the houses began to open, and people with scared faces and disordered hair appeared in their night attire. They all gazed intently into the fog, then closed their shutters in haste and fear.

As two or three people ran out upon the quay, I heard a woman in the nearest villa crying:

'The Bolsheviks have come!'

'I had better go home, so that they may be able to find me in case anything happens to Serge,' I thought, as I groped my way back in the fog, which by this time had become even more dense. Everybody was asleep in the house when I climbed back through my window, and apparently the telephone bell had not rung. Quite too

distraught to think of sleeping, I dropped into an armchair just as I was, to be ready for any possible eventuality. Toward six o'clock the shooting suddenly stopped, and soon afterwards I heard Serge's knock at the window.

'Why are you not in bed?'

'I was waiting for you. Will you please tell me *now* what has happened?'

'We decided to give the Bolsheviks a fright and to show them that we are always on guard. That is why we have been shooting from the jetty. You will see that there will not be any demonstrations from them to-day,' he added with a gleeful chuckle.

Developments proved him to be quite correct, as the demonstrations did not take place on New Year's Day, though the assaults on the officers of the Volunteer Army were redoubled.

It was just about this time that Serge was sent on a short trip to Ekaterinodar by the chief of the garrison of Yalta to carry messages to the General Staff of the Volunteer Army. I was very glad that he had to go, for I hoped the journey would calm him somewhat. To be away from the Port Section for a time could only be beneficial to him. Inasmuch as letters traveled very slowly in these days and I could consequently have no news, I made up my mind not to be anxious about him.

In the midst of all this agitation it was a great comfort for me to have Dunia and my mother's maid arrive from Moscow, though they brought disheartening tales of the way they had been stripped of all valuables at the border.

Just shortly afterward Serge returned from Ekaterinodar, bringing with him one of his brothers, who had escaped from Bolshevik-controlled territory in the

Caucasus. They came to find the town throbbing with work in the interests of the Volunteer Army. The committee with which I was connected successfully devoted its energies to collecting substantial sums of money, that went to the Red Cross or to the chief of the garrison to pay the officers' salaries and the allowances to the families of the killed or invalided officers and soldiers. The Volunteer Army had very little money in its coffers, and agitation was spreading in Yalta as it slowly began its retreat.

One heard everywhere talk of the necessity of abandoning the Crimea and of taking refuge in Novorossisk. People were beginning to go away, paying enormous prices for passage on Greek, Turkish, French, and other ships, most of them sailing for Novorossisk. All our family remained in Yalta, where the husbands and brothers were working for the army. Serge had just been appointed liaison-officer between the Allied Fleet and the Russian Staff in Yalta, at the same time continuing to command the Port Section, thus having more than he could really do without abnormal strain.

Extraordinary were the special types of panic-stricken people that revealed themselves during these days in our Crimean health resort. I never had seen anything like it in my life. Just as people with some chronic illness worry every one around them by speaking of their troubles the whole day long, so these unfortunate '*paniquers*' trembled over the danger long before it really came, neither sleeping nor eating and growing thinner every day. We assisted at two real panics deserving the name during our Bolshevik experiences, and I must say that I have never seen more unhappy, distraught souls than these

'*paniquers*.' From the beginning of February one could always find groups of them gathered on the quay or at the tea-room which had become the center of their world, and which was interesting to visit just to hear their marvelously imagined tales. The place soon acquired the nickname of the '*Centro-Gossip*,' as it was there that all the news, especially the harrowing items, was disseminated.

But what was really causing all of us the most concern at the time was the refusal of the Dowager Empress, Maria Feodorovna, to leave Russian soil in case of real danger. The Allies several times offered to send a man-of-war to take her away. In connection with one of their proposals, Serge accompanied some British officers to 'Charaks,' where Her Majesty was staying.

'It is dreadful,' he said, when he returned. 'The Volunteer Army is retreating toward Novorossisk, and we alone cannot defend the Empress.'

The position became daily more alarming, as the local Bolsheviks were organizing, in spite of the searches and arrests which took place almost every night. Serge used to come home for only three or four hours of sleep, with his nerves strained to the utmost, and would awaken me to tell me about arrests, executions, and the like. I remember one instance which showed pitifully to what a pitch the tension over this fight to the finish had mounted in us all.

My eldest brother-in-law and a friend of his, a mere lad of eighteen, neither of whom would have willingly hurt anybody, came home one morning with Serge, after a night on duty, to have a cup of coffee.

'What is the matter with you?' I asked, surprised at

their strange expressions and actions. There was something repulsive and fearful about them, as they gesticulated and laughed at everything in a queer, unnatural way. I had never seen them in such a state before.

The coffee was served on the balcony, where there was nobody except myself to hear them. Always I hated their tales, but, in the presence of my mother or of any one else, I loathed them still more; for in those days it seemed as though even our own men, whom we had always known in their normal character, had lost all sense of the proprieties in what they discussed before women.

'We were chasing a Bolshevik,' said Serge. My brother-in-law and the boy shook with laughter.

'Well, and did you capture him?' I asked, realizing all too well that their laugh was a nervous, unnatural one.

They began to tell about it, interrupting one another constantly. At intervals they would remember they were talking in my presence and then would modify their tale in such a manner as to try not to shock me, but they had been so impressed and obsessed by what had happened during the capture that their involuntary exclamations, interpolated phrases and gestures made me see the picture as vividly as though I had been with them through it all. Five years have passed since then, but I still remember that tragic presentation on the balcony, down to the inhuman, abnormal expressions that showed on their faces for fleeting seconds, and the horror which forced me to shrink away from them and even made the hair stand up on my head. During that night they had been more or less passive witnesses of what was going on, and perhaps that was the reason this particular case had made such an impression on them. My brother-in-law,

who was very nervous after all he had been through in recent years, shook at intervals with a harsh laugh, which bruised me as though it were a club.

'Enough!' I burst out suddenly. 'I do not want to listen to more. Enough, I tell you!' I cried at him, as he continued his brutal laughter, and I had the intense desire to seize him by the shoulders to shake him out of the nightmare that had gripped him. In a flash every one felt uneasy and was silent; for they realized then that they had overstepped the bounds, while I, on my part, felt that I had been too harsh with them in their abnormal mood.

'You are rather . . . nervous to-day,' said Serge, when we were alone.

'It is not only to-day — never could I listen calmly to these stories or see you all in such a state.'

I could not get used to it, even to the very end, for it was too terrible to see the wild beast in the men who were so close to me. I just steeled myself to have a passive feeling toward their tales, and toward the events which inspired them.

'*Je me laissais vivre*,' one says in French.

I had to do it for the sake of those men, as only thus could they have a home to which they might retreat and calm down.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE MIGRATION OF A CITY

EVENTS followed each other as in a kaleidoscope; with riots in the town, retreat at the front, and panic succeeding one another as though one were turning the cylinder of tragic history with an impatient hand. Sometimes everything took on a dark and somber hue, while at other moments all was unexpectedly flooded by the bright light of hope. An event which brought the shadows down for me was Serge's second journey to Ekaterinodar.

One of his friends, who was at the head of a Cossack regiment, offered him the post of second in command with promotion to the rank of Colonel. For a long time I was uncertain what to say, for Serge had announced that he would go only on condition that I had nothing against it. As a result of his wounds in the Great War he had been retired from active service and could have refused to return to the front, but the feeling that it was his duty to fight for his country so long as he could move dominated and drove out all other considerations.

He had great difficulty in deciding what was really the right thing to do, as I was in far from the best of health at this critical time in my life and as the early evacuation of the Crimea seemed daily to be growing more certain. I was worried to have to stay in Yalta and thus be away from Serge just at a time when I might have been of greatest help to him; but, as he wanted very much to go

and was receiving telegram after telegram from his friend, I had no option but to agree to the plan.

Once the decision was made, he left by the first boat, just a day before a terrible storm broke over the coast. The northeast wind, which is so violent in the Black Sea, blew with such force that one could not walk along the quay, as the waves were breaking over the sea wall and flooding the promenade. The temperature dropped to eight degrees below zero, which was extraordinary for the Crimea, where snow fell very rarely.

On the second or third day I went to make one of my regular visits to see if the men of the Port Section had all they required. As I entered the room, some of the officers who were present became suddenly silent and grave. I noticed the confused expressions on their faces and the fact that they were more *aux petits soins* with me than usual. During the night the storm increased in violence, until the house shook as though it were made of cardboard.

'How fortunate that Serge has already landed!' I thought, as I was wakened by the howling and roaring of the wind in the chimney.

In the morning the second in command of the Port Section rang me up.

'It is Captain Nicolsky speaking. Is it you, Mrs. Serge?'

'Yes, what is it?'

'Have you any news from your husband?'

'No. Why do you ask?'

'May I come immediately to see you?'

'Certainly.' He hung up the receiver and left me with the feeling that this conversation was far from quieting.

I had no idea of what might have happened to Serge, though it was clear that something unusual had occurred.

'I must be calm,' I repeated mechanically, walking up and down the room and noticing that my hands were trembling. I sat down and made a strong effort to control myself. Though the trembling ceased, I could now hear the beating of my heart and felt this to be a still more unbearable torture. I took up a book and began feverishly reading aloud in order to hear my own voice. To this very moment I can see that little green volume, Le Bon's 'La Psychologie des Foules,' which I was reading; but at the time the beating of my heart prevented a single word of it from being imprinted on my mind.

It seemed to me that a century passed before the entrance bell rang and Nicolsky was announced. He coughed and kept silent for a moment after he sat down.

'Well,' I remarked in an attempt to draw him out.

'There is nothing special; you must not be frightened,' he began.

'I am not frightened; but be so kind as to tell me what the matter is.'

'Oh, really, it is nothing. Perhaps it is not worth speaking about.' I saw he was himself growing afraid of what he had to say.

Just at this moment the bell rang and the maid brought me a telegram, which I mechanically crumpled in my hand without any thought of reading it.

Captain Nicolsky kept silent.

'Has he been killed?' I asked; and I heard my words ring cold as ice.

'No.'

'Then what has happened? Do tell me. I command you to speak!' I said, springing up.

Some people have certainly a most incredible way of trying to prepare others to receive bad news.

'Well, if you order me to speak . . .' and he shrugged his shoulders. 'A wireless has been received saying that the St. Nicholas, the ship on which your husband sailed, has had a mishap.'

'What sort of an accident?'

'She struck a mine and went down just off Novorossisk.'

'Was anybody saved?'

'I fear not.'

Silence.

'Are you sure Serge was aboard the St. Nicholas?' I asked, though I knew it well enough.

'Yes.'

'He has not perished,' I said suddenly, feeling, in some inexplicable way, that my fears had given place to a calm assurance.

'How can you know this?'

'I feel it.'

Nicolsky was looking at me with a frightened expression. He probably thought I was going mad. Then, suddenly, he noticed the crumpled paper I was holding in my hand.

'You have not read your telegram,' he reminded me, glad to be able to change the subject.

I broke the seal, unfolded it, and read:

Have arrived safely at Novorossisk. Do not be anxious.
SERGE

It may seem strange, but I felt I was going to faint at that moment. I set my teeth together and handed the telegram to Nicolsky, who read it and stood looking at me in wonder.

'Had you already seen it?'

'No, they brought it in your presence.'

'The Major is always getting into some sort of a mess,' finally came from the Captain, who, being a very peaceful man himself, did not hold with people that went venturing about as Serge did. 'I am sure he does not care a bit about it all; but just think how I felt preparing you for the news of his death!'

About a week later I received a letter from Serge which ran in part:

The wind was terrible, and the waves came constantly over the deck, sweeping off everything they could wrench loose. The temperature was so low that the entire ship was covered with a thick coating of ice. I was almost the only man among the passengers who kept his feet, and passed most of my time with the Captain. Down below almost everybody was deathly ill, moaning or crying for mercy. We were certainly not far from perdition. We tried without success to enter the Novorossisk harbor and had to bucket about on the sea for two days. Then we picked up a radio, announcing that we had perished! A lady passenger, on hearing this news, became quite calm and declared that she was now reassured as to her fate. When we asked her what she meant, she explained that there is a well-established belief that, if the living are prayed for under the assumption that they are dead, they will live for a long time. I am glad you knew nothing of our situation. I sent you a telegram the moment I came ashore.

It turned out that Serge's journey to the front ended abruptly and with ineffable sadness, for his friend the

commander died the day before his arrival, so that the promised service with him gave place to the sad duty of bringing his body back to the stricken widow in Yalta.

By this time the evacuation of Yalta had been practically decided upon, and the Dowager Empress had at last consented to leave, only on condition, however, that everybody who wished to go could be taken away. The three last weeks of our life in Yalta passed in momentary waiting for the announcement of the day on which we were to embark. We supposed, of course, that we should be given three or four days' warning, but it turned out that the news of the sailing of the transports came to us only on the evening previous to their appearance, so that we had to spend the whole night in packing.

Inasmuch as the Volunteer Army had already retired so far to the eastward that the Red forces could enter the Crimea at any moment, the much-talked-of danger had now become a reality. Of course, no person connected with the Volunteer Army or having anti-Bolshevik leanings wanted to remain behind; and yet no one knew whether there would be sufficient ships for all the fugitives.

'Please tell every one that there is no cause for anxiety. I give my word that everything will be properly organized and that everybody that wishes to go will be taken away,' came as a great, quieting influence from the captain of a British destroyer who had been appointed to supervise the evacuation.

Serge came in for a moment to bring me this announcement. He was remaining in the port now, even at night, as he had been designated by both the Russian and the British commands to see the evacuation through.

Knowing of this, people were coming constantly to the villa to make inquiries.

'When would the ships be in? Would there be sufficient room for everybody? When would they be permitted to enter the piers? . . .'

At last Serge brought us word that the first ship would arrive at ten the following morning and that we were to go directly to the port with all our luggage. I was feeling quite spent that morning, after having passed the whole night in packing. It was with difficulty that we found the necessary droskies for mother and myself, our servants and belongings. The double line of carriages, carts, and drays, piled high with every conceivable kind of luggage, slowly moving along the quay made one feel that the migration of the tribes had again begun.

'At this pace we shall never be able to make the port in time,' people remonstrated anxiously.

As it seemed to me absolutely essential to warn Serge of the necessity of extricating my mother out of all this tangle, I jumped out of the drosky and entered the port by a side gate. In this section it was quite deserted, with not even workmen in sight; but, coming to the landing-stage, I was stopped by a patrol of British sailors.

'I should like to see the White Devil immediately, if I am not allowed to pass,' I said.

'He is too busy,' they answered me, and gave me the thought that probably many had tried to reach him in this way.

'Will you please just tell him that his wife wants to see him for a moment?'

'His wife? Are you really his wife?' they asked, looking at me incredulously.

'Certainly I am. Well,' I added, seeing that they did not believe me, 'then at least please carry a note to him from me, while I wait here.'

'You see, Madame, four or five ladies have already come here and tried to pass, saying they were the wife of the White Devil,' they apologized very civilly. So I wrote:

Five wives have asked for you already. I am the sixth. Come quickly or they will not let me pass.

About five minutes after one of the men had gone off with my note, Serge appeared.

'This is really my wife,' he announced with a laugh to the guard. 'You may let her through.'

Near the entrance to the jetty a barrier had been erected, on one side of which pressed the crowd, while on the other a platoon of the Port Section and several sailors from the destroyers, with their revolvers in hand, stood guard.

'See what we have had to do! If we had posted no restraining line here, they would have pushed one another into the sea in their panic.'

As the public were being allowed through only a few at a time, at the sight of my husband a tumult arose.

'Let us pass!' came from a hundred throats.

'We shall let you all through gradually. Do not be afraid, there will be place enough on board for everybody,' Serge answered, and led me toward the destroyer.

A deck-chair was brought off for me, so that I seated myself in the middle of the jetty. Soon Serge had brought in my mother, my two sisters, and all the children. After about three hours our luggage arrived

and was piled behind us like a veritable mountain. The children were enjoying immensely all that was happening, as there were eleven cousins present and they all looked upon the whole affair as a picnic. To sit on the trunks, to know that there was no governess behind them — all the French 'Mademoiselles' and the English 'Misses' had been taken away the day before — this was freedom worth having! They enjoyed everything, and it was a distinct relief to have them there to break the tragedy of it all.

The crowds of people were increasing, while the jetty was being piled with luggage until it seemed as though there were not an uncovered square foot to be found. And with it all, not a ship had arrived!

'I do not feel well,' said I to one of my sisters. 'I shall go back to the house and lie down for half an hour.'

'I shall come with you. There are several things I have forgotten.'

As we passed through the swarming crowds on the quay, it seemed to me quite impossible that they would all find places out on the jetty. After I had lain down for some time, I felt better, and we went back, my sister dragging with her enormous parcels of things which to me seemed to be quite unnecessary.

'Why are you taking all this?'

'Just wait till you have five children, you will also be carrying such parcels,' she laughed.

She was not the only one to do it, for everybody seemed to have the same idea of leaving as little as possible to the Bolsheviks.

It was interesting to examine the luggage on the landing-stage. The most snobbish people, who were

always *tirés à quatre épingles* and accustomed to traveling with beautiful dressing-cases and trunks, were now packing most absurd combinations. Mattresses bound with old, rusty wire into rolls, out of which peeped brooms and umbrellas, were lying in the same heap with the finest of handbags stamped with a coronet. Near them stood an enormous samovar, a camp-bed, and a basket filled with goodness knows what, tied up in a bedspread. And you saw such things everywhere.

Dunia was sitting quietly near my mother. She had packed everything and was now quite indifferent as to where she was being taken and why.

'What have you in your hand?' I asked her, noticing a small parcel which she was holding.

'I wanted to ask you whether you needed it or not.' With that she handed me out of the paper a cube of gray, gelatinous substance about the size and shape of a match-box.

'What is it?' I asked her wonderingly.

'I do not know.'

'But where did you find it?'

'In the cupboard under one of your hats.'

'Strange; I never saw anything like it before.'

'I remember seeing Mr. Serge rummaging in your hats one day some time ago. When I asked him what he needed there, he answered me: "If you seek to know too many things, you will soon grow old." Perhaps he knows something about it.'

'I shall go and ask him,' I said; and, taking the cube, went to find Serge.

'Is that yours?' I asked, showing him what we had found. 'Do you need it? What is it?'

'What is it?' he echoed, with a sly expression on his face as he stepped back from me. 'My dear, it is pyroxylin!'

Leo Tolstoy, in his book 'Childhood and Youth,' describes the fear of a governess for shot, thinking the little pellets were dangerous for the children to touch or handle, as they might explode. I sympathized with her at that moment, for I had no idea how or from what cause pyroxylin explodes, and became obsessed by an overwhelming desire to get as far away from it as possible.

'You know that that amount could blow up a whole house, that it is a very strong explosive!' Serge warned me, drawing still farther away.

I saw from the twinkle in his eye that he was making fun of me and, finding a flat, dry stone, I carefully deposited the cube upon it.

'It is for you to care for now; and I beg you in future not to endanger the shape of my hat crowns with anything like this.' With that, I swung round and went off. This was really too much for one's patience!

Serge followed and began apologizing, as he saw that I was really in a rage this time and did not appreciate his joke. But our quarrel did not last long, for we suddenly stopped and went into such a fit of laughter that every one around gazed at us in amused astonishment. This is what we had seen:

In Yalta there lived a certain Mr. C——, a perfectly charming gentleman. Enormously tall and with the build of an athlete, he had a very small and childish face, on which 'panic' had been writ large for the last two or three months. He was always saying that the Bolsheviks would come, and assured everybody that we should not

be evacuated, but shot to a man by the Reds. He was not ashamed of his lack of courage.

'How shall I ever hide or disguise myself, when there is probably no other man as tall as I in the whole Crimea?' he used to say sadly, when my husband teased him.

On this day he had quite lost his head. The Posadnik, the first transport expected and the one on which everybody wanted to have a place, was still not in sight. We had been on the jetty since nine o'clock in the morning, and it was now already five in the afternoon.

'I told you that no transport would come,' repeated C——, going about in agitation from one group of people to another. 'You may all do as you like, but I am going away.'

And it was his attempt at departure that sent Serge and myself into the peals of laughter which broke up our quarrel. It happened that quite a fleet of small Turkish fishing boats had come to Yalta. C—— had engaged one of these, loaded it with all his luggage, and asked his wife to go and take her place in it. It was her laughter over her husband's attempt to get into the boat that first drew our attention. As the sea was far from calm and the boat was being tossed about some six or seven feet below the surface of the jetty, one had to jump down into it, which was more than the enormous C—— could think of doing. The Turks tried to hold a narrow plank in place as a gangway; but the moment C—— put his weight upon it, the boat listed so that it shipped water, and the shouts of Mrs. C—— and the Turks drove the miserable C—— back up the plank. In a second attempt he made his way to the middle of the improvised bridge, but at this point it began to crack under his

weight, so that he had no option but to scramble back upon the jetty.

'Wait a moment!' cried Serge, grasping him by the hand at this juncture. 'You must not be absurd! I give you my word that the Posadnik will arrive and that I shall find places for you.'

'But if it does not come?' said C—— thoughtfully. It was obvious that the prospect of a journey across the Black Sea in a small open boat through rough weather was not irresistibly tempting to him.

'In that case you will always have time to put to sea in that shell. If you will be happier so, leave your baggage on board and do not send the Turks away until the Posadnik arrives.'

'That is better. If the Bolsheviks suddenly appear, we shall just have to take our places in the boat and be off.'

Serge shrugged his shoulders as we turned away.

'Why are you so pale?' Serge asked me.

'I am feeling very miserable.'

He took me to my mother, left me in a deck-chair, and disappeared, to return a moment later with the welcome word:

'Captain L—— proposes that you should come on board and lie down in one of the cabins till the arrival of the Posadnik.'

I went with great relief and lay down.

'I will bring Dunia in case you need anything,' said Serge and soon returned with her, carrying both my bags.

'She refused to come without these,' he explained, laughing and putting them down on the floor, while Dunia herself protested:

'Really, you are strange, Mr. Serge. How on earth

could one leave the bags when all the diamonds are in them?'

I had rested for about an hour when my brother-in-law came to tell me that the Posadnik had arrived, that the captain and sailors were French, and that people were already going on board. I had to ask him to beg Serge to come and fetch me, as the pain in my back was growing worse, though Dunia was rubbing it as much as she could. Through the porthole I could see my relatives and friends about to embark, but Serge did not come. While I was still watching for him, I heard his voice from somewhere saying:

'Don't be anxious. I shall come when every one is located, so that you will not be pushed about.'

They began to load the luggage. The crane was squeaking. Suddenly I heard a woman's cry and a burst of laughter. Looking out of the porthole, I could see the crane hauling up an enormous trunk in the net and, clinging to it, a small, fat woman, shouting loudly and struggling about in the meshes.

'What are you doing with me?' she cried in wild fright, before they lowered her safely on the hatch. I was told later that she had unlocked her trunk just at the last moment after it had already been placed in the net, and that the Frenchmen, either on purpose or inadvertently, swung her up with the luggage.

At eight o'clock Serge came running into the cabin and told me to come quickly. With great difficulty I made my way to the deck, where two of the British sailors offered to help and carried me in their arms toward the Posadnik. As we approached, I saw my brother-in-law running to us with a pale face.

'You are too late! The gangway has been raised, and they will not allow any more people on board.'

I was in despair. It was dreadful at this juncture to be separated from my mother, especially as all the medicines she needed in case of one of her heart attacks were in my handbag. But it proved useless to implore the officers to take us on board.

'*Montez par le cable si vous voulez. Nous ne remettrons pas la passerelle pour vous*,' they answered.

If the thought of Dunia going hand over hand up the hawser had not taken possession of my mind for the moment, I should have been in despair over the disagreeable position in which we found ourselves. Every one had gone on board the other transports which had arrived during the late afternoon and had already sailed, and it was probable that no other ships would be summoned.

'Well, there is nothing for us to do but to remain. It is our fate,' I observed to my brother-in-law, as the two sailors who had carried me over were trying to make me as comfortable as possible on a pile of lumber which lay near by. While Serge had gone off for something, they were openly voicing their disgust with the transport officers, and Dunia was crying. In a moment Serge reappeared out of the darkness and called us to come.

'Where?'

'Captain L—— invites you to remain on the destroyer, and the first lieutenant offers his cabin to you and Dunia.'

The sailors lifted me and carried me back to the ship. What a joy it was to be able to stretch myself out on the comfortable bed and to know that Serge was going to be

near me! On the Posadnik I should have been separated from him, as he had to remain with the British destroyers to the end and was to leave Yalta on one of them.

We Russians have a feature in our lives in which we are schooled as a matter of honor, and that is hospitality. I felt strongly that it was the same in the British Navy. I shall never forget the ten days I spent on board H.M.S. Stuart and all the attention that was so thoughtfully lavished upon me. For the first three days I was unable to get about. Early on the first morning, to the great confusion of the scandalized Dunia, a sailor steward appeared with our tea. Then he took down the tub and prepared everything for the bath. Dunia was choking with indignation.

'Now are you not ashamed that a man is doing all this for you?' she upbraided me and repeated it twenty times that day. 'I never saw anything like it,' she continued angrily, though otherwise she was much pleased and confessed she had never traveled more comfortably, in spite of the fact that she had journeyed about everywhere with me.

'It is just like the pre-war days!' she went on repeating, though in pre-war times neither she nor I had ever put foot on board a destroyer.

What pleased her most was the steward bringing me at eleven o'clock each morning an egg cocktail. Though I urged him several times to discontinue it, the officers knew I liked it and persisted in sending it every day.

'Here is your medicine,' Dunia would declare. It was impossible to disabuse her with regard to it. 'Nobody would ever drink wine in the morning for the sake of pleasure. I am sure it is the doctor who has prescribed it for you!'

Little did Dunia think, as she counseled me to take the medicine without protest, that she would soon be paying tribute to her own overlordship; for it was just after the departure of the Marlborough, which I must refer to in a moment, that Serge and I were feeling so desolately depressed that I had recourse to my egg cocktail to remove Dunia temporarily from our path. We felt so sick at heart that Serge suggested going on shore to have a cup of coffee at the Hôtel de Russie by way of an exciting bit of diversion that might distract us. Dunia was horrified and insisted upon following us.

'You must stay and keep guard over the jewels. I assure you that nothing will happen to us,' I protested, and, handing her the egg cocktail, which came in at this moment, I added: 'Just drink this.'

'Oh, I knew it; it is a medicine after all,' she said with triumph, after she had drained the glass. As poor Dunia never drank any wine, I hoped that it would immediately have a narcotic effect upon her, and was quite right, for it was only ten minutes later that we were tiptoeing out of the cabin.

As we left the ship, Serge warned the officer on duty that we were going into the town for an hour or so. With him wearing his side-arms and myself holding a small revolver inside my muff, we had the feeling of children doing something that was forbidden them and had soon more than enough of 'distracting' thoughts to preoccupy us to the exclusion of all else.

In the few days since we had withdrawn to the port, the town had changed incredibly. Though the streets were full as usual, those who made up the crowd were men and women in torn and dirty clothes, who stared at

us in wonder as we walked along the quay. Practically all the shops were closed and had their iron or home-made wooden shutters over all the windows, while piles of garbage and rubbish had already begun to collect in the gutters.

'Yalta is dying,' we remarked to each other almost simultaneously. We had seen the passing of a city in Petrograd and had observed the same conditions in Moscow away from the quarter immediately around the Kremlin, where the Bolshevik officials lived.

Arrived at the Hôtel de Russie, Serge asked the sentinel in citizen's clothes who were occupying the place.

'The Staff of the Communists of Yalta,' came in answer.

As we entered, it was strange to me to see the attractive lounge, every detail of which I had known from childhood, changed into an ammunition depot, with machine guns and heaps of arms piled about.

While coffee was being prepared for us in that deserted, echoing restaurant on the floor above, I told Serge that I would go along the corridor to see if any of our friends had remained behind. I had an irrepressible desire, before my departure, to have a look about the hotel with which I had had so many intimate associations and which I had liked so much. Everything was deserted and still; all the doors stood open, and in the rooms we saw everywhere signs of hasty departure, with gaping wardrobes and opened drawers, rags lying about, chairs overturned, and even baths filled with soapy water. Everything stood just as it had been left four or five days ago by the hastily fleeing guests. Already one could sense the smell so typical of abandoned houses. The hotel

was dead, as the town seemed to promise to be if the disintegrating process continued.

I felt dreadfully sad and, having no courage to face more of it, I took the long corridor that led to the staircase and the restaurant. Suddenly a shot sounded from below, and I ran as fast as I could toward the restaurant, certain that some one had taken revenge on Serge for his unwarranted bravado in coming there. As I burst into the restaurant, I found him sitting calmly at the table talking with a waiter.

'They did not shoot at you?'

'No, it was somewhere downstairs.'

We began to drink our coffee, but I felt so nervous after my fright that all the enjoyment for me had gone out of our escapade.

As we started down the stairs, I noticed that the group of armed men who had temporarily blocked our passage as we entered had now increased and that they were whispering and gesticulating excitedly. As they spied us, they suddenly pressed forward toward the stairs and stopped. This time we both felt that they would never let us through and, as we hesitated a moment looking at each other, Serge whispered sharply:

'Forward!'

As by command we straightened ourselves and continued the descent, feeling all the time the increasing malevolence and hatred in the gaze of that unbroken line. We walked almost into them, but they did not move. Another step and we should have been forced to stop; but just then the line parted and those nearest us removed their hats. As Serge came to the salute, I bowed slightly, and thus we made our way with un-

broken step through the aisle which they cleared for us. We passed silently out through the garden into the street and started for the port.

'I suppose you are thoroughly pleased, with your love for exciting situations?' I asked, as my heart pounded with agitation. As for myself, the pleasure came only when I was once more safely back on board the British destroyer, marveling at the follies one will commit under the dictates of great emotional stress.

I believe it was on the fifth day that we were told that we were to leave Yalta in the afternoon, as the evacuation was finished. The Stuart and two other British destroyers alone remained at the jetty, while all the transports carrying the detachments of the Volunteer Army rode at anchor just outside the harbor, ready to sail. With them lay the enormous dreadnaught Marlborough, on which the Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna and other members of the imperial family had taken refuge. The Empress had refused to go until the last of the forces had been embarked. The moment had now come when the Marlborough was to leave. As she slowly weighed anchor and steamed away, Dunia and I, as we watched the great ship, were both of us weeping in spite of ourselves.

'Why are you crying?' I asked Dunia, just to say something.

She looked at me crossly, and demanded:

'And why are *you* crying? . . . They have taken away our Empress, which means that we shall also not be able to live in Russia any more. Without the Tsar, we are like a house without its host. It means the end of everything!' and she began once more to sob desperately.

A lump pressed my throat, as she phrased for me so simply and so strongly all that I was feeling at that tragic moment.

The end of everything? Yes. But . . . is it for always? We fervently hoped that it was not, and with every day that passes this hope grows in me, in Dunia, in all the refugees, and, as certainly, in the breasts of all the unfortunate ones who are suffering and starving in Russia itself.

Just recently, while I have been trying to set down these experiences of five years ago, I listened one day to a conversation between our two little daughters, who are three and four years old respectively. One of them was saying:

'Do you remember in Moscow . . .?' Poor little tots, they have never been there, and can consequently 'remember' nothing about it. The day on which we finally left Russian territory my eldest daughter was eight months old, while the youngest was only born during our stay in Constantinople. Yet they are full of Russia; all their fairy tales are about Russia or Moscow; and often we hear them repeat the phrase: 'When we get back to Moscow . . .'

They voice the hope of all of us. Without this hope life would be almost unbearable, and only because of it can we continue to face the trials of our changed surroundings.

'We are camping,' Serge once phrased it, and we all feel the same.

## CHAPTER XV

### BYZANTIUM, IMPERIAL AND CURIOUS

THE Stuart postponed her departure and did not start until the following morning. Accompanied by the soft, dreamy sound of a flute played by one of the sailors, the destroyer let go her lines and quietly withdrew to the open sea, slipping away from the city as though it were some plague settlement.

After luncheon I sat in the wardroom reading. It was very hard to have to leave Yalta, and the thought that it was perhaps forever kept constantly recurring to my mind and diverting me from my book. As I heard footsteps near me, I looked up and saw Captain L—— entering. His sudden appearance caught me just a little unawares. After greeting me, he showed me a wireless message which he had just received from the destroyer that had remained in Yalta Bay.

'The Bolshevik forces entered Yalta at 2.30 A.M.,' it ran.

'Then we were the last to see Yalta as it was,' I said, and felt that tears were coming into my eyes.

'It must be dreadful for you,' he answered simply; 'but hope is left you,' he added, as he gave me a firm grasp of the hand and went out.

I knew him very slightly, much less than I knew many of the other officers, but to this day I always feel grateful to him for the tactful and simple way he told me this news and for the words that followed it.

Toward evening we arrived at Novorossisk, where

quite a number of ships carrying refugees were anchored in the harbor with many of them flying the yellow quarantine flag. As it was impossible in the huge port to make out the Posadnik, on which my mother and sisters had embarked, we decided to go into town to see if we could secure any news of them.

On being told that the Stuart had to be off in the morning, we left Dunia and our luggage on board, engaged a drosky, and rushed about to all the hotels in search of our relatives. Novorossisk was crammed with people, though even that gives but a feeble indication of what we saw there. There was not one room in any of the hotels which did not contain at least five or six people, while the halls, drawing-rooms, restaurants, corridors, and bathrooms were likewise given over to sleeping-quarters. On the tables, under them, on everything and everywhere, people were sleeping; others were cooking over spirit lamps; children were crying; wet underclothes hung about; and this was not the worst, as hundreds of families had to remain out in the streets in the mud, for the weather was terrible. Less unfortunate ones crowded under rude shelters built in haste; others simply camped under the open sky.

'What a nightmare!' Serge kept repeating in horror.

We ran about from one place to another for nearly three hours, but without finding my mother or any of our relatives. No one in Novorossisk seemed to know anything about the Posadnik. Our consoling thought was that perhaps it had not yet arrived, though this offered us little in view of the fact that it was already six days since it had left Yalta and normally the journey takes only thirty-six hours.

At last, late at night, we turned up at the home of some friends who had lived for some time in Novorossisk. They had retired, but immediately donned their dressing-gowns when they found out who we were. They told us the Posadnik had arrived in port that morning, but that she had been at once quarantined because of two cases of typhus that had developed on board. They informed us that it seemed futile to quarantine the ships, adding:

'It really is becoming terrible here, for there is hardly a house in town in which there is not a case of typhus. We are isolated as much as possible.'

Before leaving them, we asked them to inform my mother, if they should see her, that we were all right and that she must not be anxious about us. We then made our way back to the Stuart, where Serge went immediately to the captain. In ten minutes he was back with the first lieutenant, who brought us this message:

'The captain proposes that you go with us to Constantinople, from where he will arrange a passage for all of you back to Batum. He considers it quite impossible for you in your present condition to remain in Novorossisk with this terrible typhus epidemic raging.'

Serge, who well knew how difficult it would be to persuade me, stood silent near by. For a long time I refused because the idea of leaving mother behind in Novorossisk was dreadful to me; but finally they insisted so positively that I had to give way and agreed.

The Stuart ran out into the open sea the following morning. The journey of only eighteen hours to Constantinople was wonderful, though the sea was rough and the wind considerably more than fresh. Poor Dunia was quite ill and had to stay below, while I remained out-

side in a comfortable deck-chair which the sailors brought for me. A destroyer pitches and rolls ten times as much as an ordinary ship, so that we were tossed about like a nutshell. I enjoyed it immensely, though I simply could not get up from my chair, as I was afraid of falling. Yet the memory of the journey is one of unmingled pleasure, coming as it did in such a striking contrast of freshness and cleanliness after the nightmare of crowding and disease which we had seen in Novorossisk.

The next morning at sunrise, as we steamed into the Bosphorus, all of us were on deck. Never before had I seen anything so beautiful as Constantinople and the Bosphorus bathed in the light of the morning sun. It was April, and the almond-trees, with their blossoms of delicate pink, dotted the dark shores as we moved slowly along and saw developing before our eyes the grand panorama of all the palaces, villas, and mosques with their slender columns and uniquely shaped windows. On the left, the Asiatic shore, villages with small white, pink, yellow, and purple houses climbed the hillside.

Suddenly, from behind a sharp turn, Constantinople itself appeared. I shall never forget the impression of grandeur it made upon me. Later I learned that this capital of the Byzantine Empire, except for some sections of old Stamboul, was beautiful to look upon only from the outside.

As we dropped anchor before the Sultan's summer palace of Dolma Bagtché, the red and golden rays of the sun were just beginning to filter through the mist that overhung Pera and Stamboul. The minarets of Sancta Sophia, this sanctuary which was long ago lost to us and over which the Moslem crescent took the place of the

cross, were the first to press their outlines through the filmy veil. We all stood in silence; everything was too majestic for words.

As soon as they could go ashore, Serge and his brother went to town to search out rooms for us, where we might wait until a ship could be found that would take us to Batum. While they were away, I spent the morning exploring Constantinople through a field-glass. At about three o'clock Serge returned and reported:

'I have been able to find only two small rooms, as the town is full of refugees from Odessa and the Crimea. We must return immediately to make sure of holding them.'

After we had taken grateful leave of our hosts, the motor-launch ran us back to the quay of Top-Hané, just in front of the palace of Dolma Bagtché, where Serge managed to find us a carriage that rattled us through the streets at a speed that would be countenanced only in a half-Asiatic town.

What strange impressions of the place were borne in upon us! As beautiful and poetic as Constantinople looked from the outside, just so ugly was it in its depths. It was the European part of the town, Galata and Pera, through which we were passing. Along many of the streets we could see rows of houses which were in ruins and which were held up with innumerable wooden props, but in which people continued to live. From the balconies and windows and between the houses were hanging all sorts of rags, undergarments, drying fish, and the like. In the never-swept streets lay piles of rubbish, in which cats, dogs, and half-naked children rummaged side by side. Peddlers hawked dusty sweetmeats, buns, lemonade, and fruit, while every one seemed trying to outdo

the other in his shouts. Though the noise was deafening, the smell of fried fish mingled with odors from the street was infinitely worse.

This was our initial experience in Constantinople, and I confess that our heads went round. From the very first moment our carriage was followed by half a dozen beggars and *hamals*, or porters, bent on carrying in our luggage wherever we should stop, and plotting to extract as much as possible out of the inexperienced newcomers. Our driver, leaning over in quite a matter-of-fact way to one side or the other, would push off the steps the most impudent of them, who tried to climb into the carriage. His long whip was even laid several times mercilessly across their backs, yet they never left us till we arrived at the door of our hotel.

'Christ, our Lord, have mercy upon us!' Dunia repeated over and over, as she pressed to her bosom the small handbag containing my jewels. At last, quite beside herself with the wanton intrusions of our brigand-like cortège, she rose, placed the bag under her, and sat upon it, observing in a new-found calmness: 'It will be safer there!'

When we reached the Rue des Petits Champs, which ranks with Pera Street as one of the principal thoroughfares of the European part of the town, we found less noise, that is of the Asiatic type, though it was crammed with motor-cars.

Opposite the Pera Palace, the leading hotel in the city, we were met by the *commissionnaire* through whom Serge had secured our rooms. Jumping on the step, he said something to the driver, who then rattled us along and stopped before a door over which was written in

enormous gold letters: 'Grand Hotel Athena Palace.' I lifted my eyes and saw a house of four stories with a breadth of two windows. As we entered, we found it a peculiar brand of palace, with a dark, slippery passage, an equally uninviting spiral staircase, and the usual suffocating smell of fish and garlic.

I looked back to see Dunia climbing the stairs with a disgusted air, lifting up her dress as well as she could with the bag she carried and grumbling in an undertone. Serge and my brother-in-law, who had found this beautiful abode, were following behind with an air of quiet pervading them, while the *commissionnaire*, who was in the lead, was volubly explaining that this was one of the best hotels in Constantinople and that we were really very lucky people to secure accommodations at all, particularly here.

On the threshold of our rooms on the second floor stood two women, one of them horribly fat, disguised with powder and dressed in a silk and velvet gown of the most disagreeable greenish color; the other one — but it were better that I refrain from describing her. I may just say that her costume counted only a short chemise and bedroom slippers. Certainly the day was very hot, but . . . !

The rooms seemed more or less decent and more or less clean. We went to have our supper at the Pera Palace and soon came back for the night. Serge, Dunia, and I had to sleep in one room, while my brother-in-law and another officer, who had come with us, occupied the adjoining one. As the wall between the two rooms was as light as cardboard, one could hear every sigh of one's neighbors. In addition to this the Athena Palace turned

out to have other exceptional features. Not a single door could be locked, fighting took place on the stairs five or six times a day, and the inhabitants, who were nearly all Greeks, walked about freely almost without clothes. Dunia stormed more than any of us. In fact, she was the only one who did not take things in a philosophical way and never saw the funny side of our predicament. Blaming Serge for everything, she never gave him a moment's peace, and, in the end, annoyed us both so much that we remained in the rooms as little as possible.

We went everywhere about the town, dining alternately in the Greek, Turkish, and Armenian restaurants, the so-called '*shashluichnia*,' and tried all the concoctions. In one café, somewhere in the depths of Galata, my eye picked up in the menu an enticing idea under the description of '*Œufs aux Huîtres*.'

'Don't you think it sounds nice? It must be a wonderful combination.'

The men agreed with me, but suggested that I should try it first. A moment later a plate was put down in front of me with two soup spoons in it, each one containing the yolk of a raw egg.

'Why, what is this? I asked for some "*Œufs aux Huîtres*." Where are the oysters?'

'But, Madame, that's what you have. They are called so because they slip down like oysters,' placidly answered the Greek.

'Let us go and have coffee at the Pera Palace,' suggested Serge, after we had dined.

While we were sitting in the tea-room of the hotel, an acquaintance told my husband that some of our friends had just arrived from Odessa and were staying at the

Tokatliana. Serge and his brother went off to look them up, while I remained and played chess with our officer friend. About an hour later Serge dashed into the room.

'You are here? Where did you go?' he asked excitedly.

'What do you mean? We have not moved from this room.'

'Then she is probably mad!'

'Who?'

'Dunia.'

'Why, what happened?'

'As we were coming back along the Rue des Petits Champs, we saw her standing on the balcony outside our room. The moment she sighted us, she began screaming at the top of her voice, "Where is your wife? Where is she? they have kidnapped her! I warned you to look out for her." We left her crying and wailing, and came here at a run, to see what had happened to you. Do come home, for the poor thing is fearfully nervous about you.'

After hurrying, almost running, back to our lodgings, we tried to open the door of our room, but found it would not yield.

'Dunia, open the door.'

'Have they found you?' she cried.

'But, my dear, they never lost me.'

'Just wait. I shall let you in at once.'

Then foliowed a crash, the sound of tumbling articles, and the door flew open, revealing Dunia in the middle of the room, wiping her eyes, and all the furniture piled in a conglomerate heap behind her.

'What is the matter with you? How did you manage to lock the door? There was no key when we left.'

'Oh, I just pushed the bed and wardrobe against it,

for there was fighting in the passage all the time and I was afraid some of them would come into the room.'

'Whatever did you mean when you said to Mr. Serge that I had been kidnapped?'

'I was sure it was so, for they always kidnap women for their harems in Turkey; and I saw that Mr. Serge was without you and never imagined that he could think of leaving you alone for one second in such a place as Constantinople where there are so many harems. Lord have mercy upon us!' she muttered, as she made the sign of the cross. She was quite beside herself and shot furious glances at the three men, who were laughing at her fears and her irresistibly humorous concern for me. At last she seemed to calm down somewhat, but a moment later I heard her whisper threateningly in my husband's direction: 'If you ever lose her, just you wait and see what will happen to you!'

Serge did not hear her say it, for the flow of words which she seemed to be rehearsing for an onslaught against him was stemmed by some element in his laughing face. She can be a terrible old vixen at times and will never allow people to forget that she nursed and cared for me from babyhood.

After two more days in Constantinople we received word that passage had been arranged for us to Novorossisk and Batum on the transport Nile and that we should be at the British Naval Base early the next morning, where a boat would be waiting to take us on board. Serge immediately secured from the British authorities the additional permission to take my mother, both sisters, and their children away from Novorossisk.

This trip was a wonderful one. When we arrived at the

Naval Base, a motor-boat at once took us off to the enormous military transport which lay anchored in the middle of the Bosphorus. We were tremendously relieved at escaping from our Constantinople surroundings and were also very gay with the thought that it was Easter Eve and that we had a basket of good things with us for the midnight supper which is so inseparably linked with the Eastertide in Russia.

Dunia contributed a bit by entering upon a series of adventures. Just as she was about to step from the launch to the platform at the foot of the gangway, she lost her balance and landed on the bottle of vermouth which we had in the basket and broke it. This was only the beginning of her misfortunes. When we reached the deck, we left her by the handbags and went along to search out our cabins. Returning a few minutes later, I found her enthroned in a chair, looking as black as night and surrounded by several members of the crew, who were trying to make her understand something.

'Here we are!' she snapped at me. 'You left Yalta because of the "Reds" and now we have landed in the hands of the "blacks!"' All the crew, to the very last man, were dark-skinned Maltese.

I took her down into the cabin. The Nile was carrying to Novorossisk many British officers, who were going out to have a hand in the work of Denikin's Volunteer Army. Also the commander-in-chief of the Black Sea forces was on board with his staff en route to Ekaterinodar to confer with General Denikin. The captain of the Nile was a fine old Scotchman, who was making his first trip in the Black Sea. As the entrance to the Bosphorus had been mined by the Turks during the war and the clearing of the mine-

fields had not yet been completed, the skipper was visibly anxious and warned me:

'Come on deck fifteen minutes after we start, and don't forget to bring the old maid with you. One never knows with these mines. We have the plans of the mine-fields, of course, but we never can make sure that one of them will not get adrift and shake us up a bit.'

Naturally we were on deck well before the fifteen minutes were up. Every one was ordered to put on a life-belt and assigned to a place in one of the boats. Dunia was terribly frightened. She never understood a word of what was said to her, fastened the life-belt around her knees, so that she was sure to go head down in the water, and would not even listen to me when I remonstrated with her. The whole performance was bewildering to her, and she was convinced that we were to be blown up.

'They would not bother to do all this if they were not sure it was going to happen!' she repeated time and again.

It became a real difficulty when I tried to take the belt away from her after we had passed through the danger zone. She simply refused to part with it and even kept it under her pillow at night.

I remained on deck all the afternoon, basking in the cleanliness and freshness of the beautiful weather and chatting with the captain, who was most courteous and entertaining. I had forgotten about Dunia until I went below to dress for dinner and found her sitting gloomily in the cabin.

'How are you?' I inquired. I confess I am always a little frightened of her when she is in such a mood.

'I couldn't be better,' she answered, 'thank you *so* much. I have had nothing to eat the whole day.'

'What do you mean? Mr. Serge sent your luncheon and tea along to you.'

'Oh, yes, he did all right; but if you think I would touch any dishes a black man brought in, you are mistaken!'

'But, my dear . . .'

'There is no "but" about it; for I won't have it, and there is an end to it.'

'Then I am very sorry, but I cannot do anything for you,' I said, beginning to get cross myself and leaving her.

I returned to the cabin only late in the evening and found her still sitting there, but with a complacent expression on her face and a sly twinkle in her eye.

'You know, I had a wonderful dinner. There is an orange I have kept for you,' she announced, when she saw that I did not put any questions to her and because she was probably feeling guilty for her earlier fit of bad temper.

'Then you have changed your mind about the blacks?'

'Oh, he brought such nice things for my dinner, and then sat down and showed me some photographs of his wife and children, telling me he was so unhappy without them and that . . .'

'But how did you ever manage to understand each other?'

'Oh, one always can, if one wishes to, you know!'

She was quite pleased, and it transpired that she and the steward became so friendly that she was certainly looked after much better than we were. She always re-

ceived more liberal portions and two or three additional desserts with each meal. But once she nearly had a falling-out with him. This was the second morning of our voyage. After I had returned to the cabin from my bath, the steward knocked and asked me to tell 'the old madame' that her bath was ready and that he would show her the way. Dunia, much pleased, went out with dignity written all over her face, while I proceeded with my dressing.

Hardly ten minutes had passed before she dashed back into the cabin, banging and locking the door after her. She was scarlet, and one could see she was furious and scandalized beyond words about something that had happened.

'Well, what is up now?' I began with a laugh, feeling that some further extraordinary experience had been visited upon her.

'Oh!' she seemed just able to articulate under her breath, 'Oh! Did he wash *your* back, too?'

'Wha-a-t?'

'I say, did — the — black — devil — also — wash — your — back?' she hammered out.

'Did he wash yours, may I ask?'

'He tried to, but I stopped it by pushing him out of the place and locking the door. And there is nothing funny about it, you know,' she added, seeing I was rocking with laughter. The picture of old Dunia in her bath with the steward soaping her back had proved too much for my composure.

A little later it came out that the man, after having taken Dunia to the bathroom, proposed to help her — all this by gestures, as they could not speak to each other

with Dunia not knowing a word of English, and the man having no Russian.

'He took the soap, rubbed his back, and then pointed to mine; and then I just naturally pushed him out of the room,' Dunia explained.

'But perhaps he did not mean what you thought he did!'

'He did. Don't say he did not; I know these blacks!'

'How can you know them when you have never seen them before?'

'I know them because I am old,' she answered solemnly.

But afterwards she probably thought there might be some truth in what I had said, for toward evening I found them in animated conversation, always gesticulating most vigorously. A series of photographs of black men, women, and children, together with a dish of fruit and cups of coffee, stood on the table in front of them; and they seemed to be enjoying it all immensely.

'He says I am like a second mother to him,' Dunia confided to me when I came in for the night.

We arrived at Novorossisk early on the third day and anchored there for about twenty-four hours, as General M—— had to go to Ekaterinodar and back. We found my mother and sisters and persuaded them to go with us to Batum, where my youngest brother was already living. As Serge had a villa there, which he had bought just before the Revolution, we hoped to go at once to live in it, although certain formalities had not been concluded and the previous owner was consequently still occupying it.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE JEWEL OF THE CAUCASUS

'BATUM — look! I have never seen anything so beautiful,' an English officer exclaimed to me, as we were approaching it.

He was right. I have traveled much about Europe, but never have I seen anything like Batum and the country around it. The whole picture recalled vividly the French and Italian Riviera, though Batum is more beautiful in its wildness and its rank luxuriance of vegetation.

After the Nile, with that majestic leisure of a great ship, came slowly up to the pier, Serge, who was the only one of us that had been in Batum before, immediately arranged everything for my mother and the rest of us to proceed directly to Zeliony Muis, or Green Cape, about four miles from Batum, where my brother was living. With the town absolutely full, we had to descend upon him for the first few days until we could find quarters elsewhere.

We had had no time to send a message to him about our arrival, so that the poor boy was quite stunned when he saw all the family — there were twelve of us — arrive and prepare to camp out in his small, neat villa. He had been married for only two months and was still enjoying his honeymoon. Though I was, of course, very sorry for him, we had to look upon all this as a picnic and to find what humor we could in the situation.

The villa crowned a high hill, from which the view out

over the sea and inland to the ranges of mountains was gorgeous. In the large garden, filled with magnolias, oleanders, azaleas, orange-trees, tea-bushes, and roses, everything was in full bloom. But the most marvelous picture of all was the great blue canvas of the mountains, which were covered everywhere with hydrangea, or hortensia. The bushes grew close together in great masses, choking and crowding out everything else. The landowners cut them, burned them, and tried in every way to destroy them, but they marched on steadily and claimed all the land in their path.

The bamboos were also lovely in the landscape and most wonderful in their growth. I remember how we marked a bush stalk with a knife one morning when we were going to town and found, as we came back in the evening, that it had pushed upward over two inches. Never have I seen such luxuriant and irrepressible growth in vegetation as there in Batum. There was even something frightening about it, something before which one could not help feeling small and powerless.

Also I saw there one thing which I shall never forget — the so-called 'green ray.' It is only seen once or twice a year, and it was quite by chance that I happened to be looking out over the sea at the moment of its appearance. The sun was already dipping below the horizon, so that there remained only a small segment of it reflected in the sea. Then, just at the very instant that the last bit of it was engulfed, up out of the place where it had disappeared flashed a brilliant ray, neither red nor pink, but green, as green as an emerald! It shot up against the pale blue sky like some exotic piece in a display of fireworks, remained for two or three seconds, and vanished. It was

so wonderful and also so strange, since I had never heard of it before, that I pinched myself to make sure that I was not dreaming. Then I thought it must have been my imagination, and only the next day did I risk asking Serge about it. I was quite astonished when I heard him say: 'Oh, the green ray! So you've seen it? Is it not wonderful?' He was decidedly prosaic about it.

Life in Batum seemed abnormally calm to us after all the harassing turmoil of the last months in Yalta, and we enjoyed it immensely. So many of us were housed in the villa that there were from two to four people sleeping in every room. Inasmuch as proper beds for all of us were out of the question, I slept on an old wire bed-spring placed between two chairs, while Serge fared still worse in that he had to double up in something that was nearer to a child's crib than to a bed for a grown man. Neither of us had a mattress, as it was impossible to buy one in town, so that the first few nights I frequently woke up feeling that the iron wires were making deep patterns all over me. But in the morning every one was gay and pretended he had been quite comfortable, forgetting the adventures of the night.

The first to leave our crowded household was my sister with her family, who had found another villa not very far away. We ourselves were searching for something in town, as my baby was to be born in about two months. Though the city was full to overflowing on account of the occupation by the British troops that was just coming into effect, we succeeded in finding — not an apartment, for that would have been too wonderful, but just a tiny bungalow situated on the shingle beach right in the camp of an Indian regiment of Sepoys. Besides having such

strange neighbors, the place boasted not a single tree, but had a plethora of mosquitoes and myriads of those flies which are the inevitable hangers-on of military stables.

Still, when I saw the bungalow, I was delighted and, although there were practically only two small rooms and nothing more, no kitchen or conveniences of any kind, I was really as pleased with the place as I should have been with a wonderful palace. My imagination, which has always been rather lively, worked hard and immediately began picturing the pleasure it would be to arrange everything as cosily as possible, to cook the dinners myself — I had never done it before — and especially to wash the floors, which I had also never done. For some reason unknown to myself, I was in very high spirits at the time; but now, after the more than ample opportunity to try my hand at these tasks during the past years, my enthusiasm cannot be said to have retained its razor edge.

The only, but the very serious, defect in the arrangement was that, although we had signed the contract and paid the rent, the previous tenant did not wish to vacate, and there seemed to be no power able to dislodge her. To all our insistence she answered: 'I am going to-morrow,' and this 'to-morrow' prolonged itself into a whole month. So we had to live on at my brother's villa, while Serge looked for a position and I sat at home and prepared everything for the baby.

At this time robberies were becoming distractingly frequent around Batum, whose local population seemed generally to have adopted this method of gaining a living. They were a mixture of Turks, Georgians, and Kurds

and were more or less wild characters. One morning we received the disquieting news that a villa quite close to ours had been robbed and the entire family of seven killed. Such conditions were so hazardous that Serge and my brothers went to the British Governor-General and requested a guard of soldiers for Green Cape. Much to our relief, they came right out the following day and took up their quarters in the beautiful villa of Prince Bariatinsky, which had been entirely looted by the Turks some months before. Two of the men patrolled in front of our house every night, so that we could all rest in peace, and for a time we heard nothing more of the robbers.

One afternoon at about five-thirty we were all sitting on the terrace having tea. As my brother was just telling us about his terrible experiences during the Revolution, we were in a rather highly strung, tense mood. Suddenly and without a word of warning we heard a shot quite close to the house, followed by a second and a third, after which a general fusillade broke out on all the mountain slopes around us. We could hear the bullets whistling overhead and even striking the trees and the walls of the house.

'Go inside quickly!' called Serge and my brother, as they pushed us through the door and disappeared, crouching low behind the garden hedge.

My sister-in-law and myself, unable to remain shut up inside, quietly reopened the door and followed them. Then we saw the two English soldiers, who had just arrived from behind the kitchen, crouching close with their rifles ready to fire. The four men met and discussed the situation.

'What the devil can it be?' asked Serge.

'I can't imagine, sir. We have been patrolling the mountain for days and have found everything quite calm.'

Momentarily the firing was becoming fiercer, and through the noise we could hear the shrill voices of Dunia and the cook, talking excitedly in the kitchen.

'Suleiman,' I heard my brother's voice, calling for our Turkish gardener.

Two shots, which surely came from the direction of the gardener's house, brought the only answer to his call. A moment afterwards we saw Suleiman himself appear with his rifle in his hands.

'What are you shooting at?' my husband demanded of him, as he approached.

'It is the Ramadan, sir.'

'Ramadan?'

'Ramadan is finished, Bairam is beginning, and we celebrate it.'

It happens that Bairam is the great feast-day of the Mohammedans following the long fast of the Ramadan.

The shooting was growing heavier every minute, until, at the precise moment when the sun disappeared below the horizon, it ceased as if by a sharp command.

'May I go, sir?' asked Suleiman.

'Where are you going?'

'I am going to eat. My wives are waiting for me. We have kept the fast for a whole month during the Ramadan.'

He went away, leaving us better informed but considerably shaken after this unusual religious demonstration.

In the beginning of June, Serge secured the post of chief interpreter at the British Military Court, so that we simply had to go and live in town. Though the lady in our bungalow was still repeating 'to-morrow' to all our demands, Serge, with the help of his English officer friends, succeeded in making her vacate, so that we were at last able to take possession of our new home.

It was a wonderful month that we spent in the bungalow. Now, when I look back upon it, it seems to me that I was playing, as in my childhood, with my dolls. We enjoyed everything. While Serge was home from the Military Court, he amused himself building a shed for a kitchen and a hut for the bath. Meantime, I was washing, cleaning, and cooking all the day long and amused myself tremendously. It was not that I had to do it, for Dunia was still with us and would have done it all much better than I did; but it seemed to me so pleasant to cook dinner for one's husband and try to invent all sorts of new dishes, or to wash the floor with a lot of water and to paddle in it! It was so novel to me that I really did not feel that the work was hard.

But the weather was becoming so terribly hot that we simply could not breathe inside our little bungalow. One such day my mother and sister came to visit me, and decided that it was impossible for me to remain there for the birth of my baby. They consequently found two wonderful rooms in a big house overlooking the park in the city, into which we moved just three days before our little girl was born. Everything went on so quietly that the man who lived in the next room never knew anything had happened until the following day, when he saw Dunia pouring hot water into the little bath.

Just at this time we received the news that all the Crimea had been cleared of Bolsheviks, that the Volunteer Army was advancing toward Moscow, and that everybody could return to Yalta. Still, Serge and I decided to remain in Batum, for I loved the place. Serge had his work and there was nothing that attracted us back to the Crimea.

The first to leave Batum was my brother-in-law, who was rejoining his old regiment of the Chevalier Guard, which had just been reorganized. We were very anxious about him, and he looked so thin and worn out that it was dreadful to think that he would have no one to watch out for his physical welfare at the front. Even so, we never suspected that his condition was as bad as later events proved.

Then one of my sisters left and a little later my mother, my second sister, and . . . Dunia! This was terrible for us, but she had to go, as she was gradually losing her eyesight and there was no experienced oculist in Batum. Thus we were left alone — my husband, myself, and my brother, whose wife had gone with my mother with the understanding that he was to follow in a few weeks.

With their departure a trying period began. Though we had ample funds, we could find no servants at a time when I was still very weak, had fever every day, and shivered constantly in spite of the fact that the weather was blisteringly hot. Moreover, as the new nurse we had found to replace Dunia could come only after a fortnight, we simply had to do everything ourselves. I confess that at some moments I was ready to drop down and weep.

But even worse than the work was the fact that I was

afraid of my baby! I was afraid of lifting her up, afraid of bathing her, afraid when she cried, and there was nobody in the house except the two of us! Never before had I felt myself to be such a helpless, silly, useless being as during those two distressing weeks. As my fever grew worse every day, in the end all the work fell on poor Serge: he cooked, he washed, he ran back to his work, he bathed the baby, he got up in the night to attend to her or to give me some medicine, he tidied up the rooms, he did everything.

Then the blessed day came when the nurse was to arrive. I shall never forget it, as it brought into our household a new, wonderful personality, another real Russian woman, but of quite a different type from Dunia. Dunia is the prose of the Russian peasant folk; Theodosia is the *poésie*, though terribly ugly-looking herself.

We were just beginning the baby's bath, and Serge was holding her on his palm, soaping her little back, when I heard the bell ring in the hall. I went to open the door, and there she stood in her beautiful white dress and apron, enormously fat, with a round, sunburned face, a nose without any shape to it, and small, intelligent black eyes. She stood for a moment motionless, then made the sign of the cross and decisively put her left foot over the threshold. I was staring at her, for she never uttered a word of greeting to me, although she knew perfectly well that I was her new mistress.

'It is with my left foot that I step into your house. My left foot is the happy one, and I wish to be happy with you!' she said, instead of 'Good-morning.' This was the beginning, and a fairly good one.

I don't know why we all like our children's nurses to be fat, ugly, and superstitious; but I am sure that I should hate to have as a nurse for my children some sort of '*mam'-selle*' who did not believe in the evil eye, who would not tell them extraordinary fairy tales, or would not touch their little faces and eyes with holy water when they sleep restlessly. It adds something to the coziness, poetry, and calm of the nursery. I knew immediately that this nurse would remain with us for a long time, if not forever. There was something wonderfully homely and restful about her.

As she came into the nursery and saw my husband bathing the little one, she just took her away from him with the words: 'Goodness gracious! She *is* thin!'

The poor child was thin; in fact I had never before seen such a thin baby. She weighed exactly four pounds when she was born and was pathetic to look at; but Serge thought she was a beauty and was horribly shocked at the nurse's words.

'She is a silly woman,' he said to me in English. 'She does not see what developed muscles the baby has!' and with that he indignantly left the room.

Silly or not, Theodosia proved to be a treasure; for after six weeks the child became beautifully plump and pink, as a baby should be.

With all our family gone, we felt rather lonely until we made the acquaintance of several British officers. Our best friends turned out to be the members of the mess across the park from our house, though the introduction was far from a stereotyped one.

One night, soon after we had gone to bed, we heard several shots under our window, an occurrence that was

perfectly natural in Moscow and the Crimea, but quite unusual for Batum. Serge, who had for a long time been chafing for something exciting, was out of bed in a second.

'Please don't go,' I begged.

'Oh, I must, you know.'

'But why must you? You have nothing to do with shooting in the streets.'

'I feel it is my duty to go,' he answered, trying to impose upon me with the seriousness and dignity of his expression.

'It is not at all your duty, for you are no policeman. Admit, rather, that you are happy to be mixed up in some excitement.'

'Perhaps!' he answered, as he finished dressing and flew out of the room, revolver in hand.

Two or three minutes later, I heard several shots, followed by cries and the sound of people running about, after which everything grew calm; but Serge did not return! I rose and looked out of the window. The night was pitch dark, the streets seemed deserted, yet I could hear distant conversation and footsteps in the park. There was really nothing to do but wait. The nurse came in and I was glad not to be alone, as I was becoming anxious.

'Mr. Serge has gone?' she asked.

'Yes.'

'Did you again have three candles burning in the room this evening?'

'I think so, but I don't remember exactly. Why do you ask?'

'Well, you know, if three candles are lighted in a room, it is a very bad sign,' she said gloomily. 'One can be

quite sure that something will go wrong, and that somebody will surely die in the house.'

'Nurse, what are you saying?' I was not exactly frightened, but still rather impressed by her words, by the darkness and the stillness around, and by the extraordinary figure of the woman in her long nightgown.

Noticing that I was growing nervous, she said:

'Well, I have already repeated "the words" to conjure away the spell of the three candles; and then, too, the cricket has been singing in the corner of the nursery and perhaps everything will be all right — at least, I hope so.'

'What words did you say?'

'The words that one must use on such occasions,' she answered elusively.

'But what are they?'

'They are what they have been for centuries,' she responded; and I did not insist, as I saw that she did not wish to say more about it.

The hours passed and Serge did not return. At last at about three in the morning I heard the sound of steps in the street and went to the window to ask:

'Is that you, Serge?'

'Yes, it is I.'

'Where have you been all this time?'

'Oh, I was at the —— officers' mess. It was very amusing. They are fine fellows and will call on you tomorrow.'

'Well, come up quickly.'

I was tired and cross and lay down, refusing to listen to him. But the next morning at breakfast he was still so excited about his night adventure that I simply had to hear the story.

'After I jumped over the park hedge . . .'

'But why did you not go through the gate? It is always open.'

'Oh, it was too far away, you know.' As a matter of fact, it was only about fifty paces from the house. 'Well, when I was once in the park I dimly made out figures rushing about and shooting. I fired, as I thought they were robbers or some bad characters, and then discovered several Sepoys coming down on me. As I was running along, I flushed a strange-looking individual dressed in something unusual. I shouted "Stop!" and fired my ten remaining shots into the air before he finally halted. I was up with him and put the muzzle of my revolver to his head, just as the Sepoys arrived and surrounded us. Then, when we lighted a match, I saw that the man I had captured, and who appeared in the dark so strangely dressed, was one of the officers in pajamas!

'"What on earth is the matter?" we asked each other. We were both bewildered until the sergeant explained that some prisoners had escaped from their cells and that they were after them. The officer had come out when he heard the soldiers running about and shouting, and we all finally wound up in the chase around the park. Then we went to the mess and sat talking for some time. That was why I was so late, you know.'

'But what about the prisoners?'

'Oh, they never found a trace of them,' my husband replied indifferently.

That is the way in which we became acquainted with the —— mess. Serge was quite right — they were exceedingly nice, and some of them soon became our close friends.

After a few days the nurse found a cook for us, so I had practically nothing to do. While Serge was at the Military Court, I spent my time in reading or in rambling among the shops, or some of our new friends would drop in for tea. Afterwards we frequently went to explore the Turkish bazaar of the town and try to find something interesting to pick up.

Several of the officers were exceptionally good companions, each one in his own way, though they had one peculiarity that was more or less common to all of them. They loved to buy all sorts of souvenirs, most of them quite useless and sometimes simply hideous, which the natives would persuade them to take as the articles most typical of the country.

Our best friend among them, with whom we still correspond, also had his idiosyncrasies. He was simply mad over carpets and ancient arms — firearms, daggers, swords, and the like. He was ready to rummage about the dirty Turkish bazaar for a whole day just to pick up some bit of carpet of a new type. In the course of our expeditions he pointed out to me about twenty-five or thirty different varieties, showing me how he differentiated them by counting the knots in a square inch of the weave, or by some distinctly typical feature in the design or texture.

One day I heard about a new stock of arms at one of the dealers', and immediately passed on my information to Captain M——.

'Oh, do come with me, for you are your husband's wife and must know a lot about arms,' he begged.

'I shall certainly go along if you like; but, mind you, I am absolutely ignorant of these things and shall take no responsibility regarding them.'

But he was convinced to the contrary and went off in that spirit.

When we saw the heap of arms and the dealer, a fat, sly Georgian, standing over it, my officer friend went veritably mad. The prices seemed so ridiculously small that he wished to buy everything in sight. In the end he bought about a dozen rifles of a strange design and as many daggers of an abnormally large size. The dealer was delighted and probably never imagined that he would be able to sell all this trash at such good prices.

'Now, how shall we ever get home?' I asked, laughing at the expression of unqualified enthusiasm on the face of my companion. 'I shall do my best to help you, but I doubt our ability to carry this lot between us.'

He answered by rushing off for a drosky, in which we perched ourselves on the pile of arms and careered at a mad speed along the principal street of this town in which so many of the *isvostchiks* have beautiful horses and drive them at a furious pace.

'I should like to show these things to your nurse, for she is a Cossack woman and is sure to know a lot about them,' Captain M—— suggested, as we hove to in front of our door.

The nurse had lived half of her life among the Cossacks of the Kuban, as well as some time among the Georgians in the Caucasus, and proved that she did know a great deal about daggers. When we had finished unloading and bringing up the arms, I called her in and explained that Captain M—— wished to know her opinion of them. She looked at them, felt and tried to bend the blades, breathed on them to test the quality of the steel, and finally observed:

'Beautiful, they are beautiful!'

'She says they are beautiful,' I informed my friend. Just then an idea came into my head.

'Don't you think they are rather large?'

'Oh, no, they are the normal size.'

'But, nurse, I have seen many Cossacks myself, yet I never saw any wearing such enormous daggers.'

'What do you mean? These are not daggers!'

'Not daggers? What are they, then?'

'Butcher knives, or kitchen knives, which the natives use to kill their sheep and calves. But they are certainly beautiful!'

'What is she saying?' inquired their new owner, who had listened anxiously.

'She repeats they are beautiful,' I responded, not having the courage to tell him the rest of her answer. He would have been miserable about it, and the dealer would certainly never have taken back the things, for he had not claimed they were daggers. Fortunately the rifles turned out to be really valuable examples and quite ancient. Also, a Georgian told me not long ago that some tribes carried very large daggers at the beginning of the last century, so it may be that they were real daggers and not kitchen knives after all.

Serge was beginning to be bothered by his post.

'It is not lively enough,' he would say. 'Just think, I have to sit shut up in a room the whole day!'

He simply has to have something exciting from time to time — a most unusual nature in this respect — and so began soon to look about for an occupation more suited to his tastes.

One morning, when I was sitting reading on our bal-

cony, I heard shots fired somewhere on the boulevard that runs along by the sea.

'Serge is sure not to miss this occasion!' was the thought that came into my mind. Only some five minutes later I noticed two men who ran out of the gate of the park and disappeared in a little street that led to the Georgian quarter of the town. Almost at the same moment I saw a motor come round the corner at full speed with Serge standing on the running-board, revolver in hand.

'Did you see them?' he shouted up to me.

'Turn to the left, for they have just gone down that street!' I cried as I jumped up. He always influences me, so that I invariably become nearly as excited as he is himself.

'Who are they?' I shouted, realizing at once that it was silly of me to ask. He only waved his hand as the motor disappeared down the little street. About half an hour later I saw them coming back with two prisoners. Serge's chief afterwards told me what had happened.

'We were sitting quietly in the office when we heard a shot on the boulevard. I ran to one window and, when I looked round, it was just in time to see your husband vaulting out through the other. I confess that my immediate impulse was to follow him, but I remembered that I was the judge of the court and let him go alone to the fray.'

It turned out that the men whom Serge caught had murdered and robbed a wealthy merchant in broad daylight in one of the principal streets of the town.

Nearly every evening we went out to a restaurant with

our friends. After our dinner at home, some one usually dropped in to go for a walk with us and then to have a cup of coffee, very frequently at one particular place where there was always good music and Tsigane songs. One evening Serge seemed specially in a hurry to start, while he and the captain who was going with us were waiting for me to dress. I was looking forward to the outing with much pleasurable anticipation, as a Tsigane singer of repute had just arrived. Suddenly, when I was all ready, I had a feeling that I did not wish to go. I am not at all capricious and am not only always ready to go about in the evening, but am decidedly fond of the diversion. This time, however, though I did not feel really ill, I simply had to stay at home.

'I am not going,' I said to them.

'Why?' asked Serge, much disappointed.

'Well, I think I have a touch of fever.' And that was the beginning of a serious illness which a whole roomful of doctors finally decided must be Oriental malaria, and which not only left me weak and shaky for six months, but also had an unexpected influence on our plans.

'We must leave for the Crimea,' Serge decided a week after I was convalescent.

'Why, what is the matter?'

'It is inadvisable for you to remain here any longer.'

Though I protested that I was quite well and that the malaria would not return in the face of the inoculations I was being given, he still insisted we must go. I knew very well why we 'must go' — he simply could not endure an occupation that meant remaining quietly in a room for eight hours and just talking. Under the strain of those abnormal days he had to get back into the active struggle.

So I did not protest, although I knew full well that our calm and peaceful life had again come to an end.

There were no passenger ships going to the Crimea, so Serge arranged for us to go on board an American destroyer. The captain was remarkably nice and gave up his own quarters for the use of the nurse, the baby, and myself. As we were to start one Friday morning and had to be on board before eight o'clock, everything was to be packed on Thursday. The nurse went about with a strange expression, but we thought that it simply indicated her regret at leaving the Caucasus after the twenty-five years she had passed there.

'What is the matter with you, nurse?' I finally inquired.

'It is no use packing and hurrying, for we shall not leave to-morrow,' she answered, to my great astonishment.

'Nonsense, we certainly shall. Nothing can stop us!'

She looked at me as though she were sorry for me.

'Why, what is the matter? Is the baby ill?' I grew fidgety under her gaze.

'Oh, the baby is all right — God bless her! But the mice have disappeared. I have not seen any to-day, and that means we have to stay for some time longer in the house. The "old man" said it was so.'

'Nonsense!' said Serge. 'If it is only on account of the mice . . .!' and we went to undress for the night, as it was about eleven-thirty and we had to get up very early the next morning. A few moments later the entrance bell rang, and a voice on the stairs called loudly:

'Major, will you please come out for a moment?'

'Strange, that is the chief. What can he want at such an hour?' said Serge, as he went to open the door.

'Excuse my coming so late, but I have just been with the Governor-General, who asked me to carry word to you that you cannot go to-morrow,' I heard through the opened door.

I hurriedly dressed and went out into the hall.

'You say we cannot go? But why?'

'Oh, well, I admit it is terribly annoying, but the Major must remain as a witness in the case of the robbers he caught some time ago, that day when he jumped out of the office window.'

'But we simply must go, for everything is packed and the destroyer is to wait for us.'

'I have already sent a message to the captain. I am most distressed for you, but I am afraid there is nothing to be done.'

I was almost ready to cry. To remain in Batum for two or three weeks longer was quite all right and pleasant enough, but the thought of having to unpack and pack once more our voluminous 'refugee' luggage simply maddened me!

'Here you are, with your "mice" and your "old man"! We are staying,' said Serge to the nurse.

She was not even astonished, and simply observed, as she went out: 'I knew it well.'

In fact, I found out afterwards that she had been so sure we should have to stay that she had not even packed her own or the baby's things! I have always wondered what would have happened in the morning if the mice had proved to be liars.

Three weeks passed, and the case of the robbers was finally closed; yet we had no idea how we should get away, as there were no ships sailing for the Crimea or

Novorossisk. Then one fine morning a Russian general of the Denikin Military Mission in Batum came running in and told me that the senior officer of the Mission was leaving for Novorossisk the following day on a little sloop and had suggested that we should accompany him.

'The captain's wardroom will be at your disposal. The only thing the general asks is that you will not mention your departure to any one, as there are so many people who have begged him to take them and have had to be refused.'

That evening the nurse gave me a terrible fright. She had come in to ask the name of the sloop we were taking.

'Teretz,' I told her.

'You said "Teretz," did you? Then I am very sorry, but I can't go with you!'

I sank down into a chair, for this was really too much.

'Pray tell me, please, why you cannot go.'

'You see, the "old man" told my mother that I must never go over the water in a boat or ship whose name begins with a "t." He said I should be drowned.'

'Who was this "old man" to whom you are always referring?'

'I don't know, really; in fact, nobody knows. I was a child of five when I last saw him, but I know that all the village believed in what he said. He was a holy man and he went about barefoot in winter, as well as in summer, carrying on himself enormous *verigi*,[1] which he never took off, even when he slept. He had been to every sacred place in Russia to worship the Holy Relics and at last he went off to Jerusalem — to die there, as he told us all.

[1] Iron chains, that sometimes weigh up to fifty or sixty pounds, worn by some of the pilgrims under their clothes as a mortification to the flesh.

He knew the whole Bible by heart, as well as the sacred legends. He checked malaria, stopped hemorrhages, cured the *klikushi*,[1] and all this he did by saying a few words, a prayer, or by just looking at the patient. Never would he accept money or presents from the people whom he had helped, but always asked them simply to light a candle before the ikon of the Holy Virgin and to pray for him. He loved my mother very much and said that she was an exceptionally good woman, also that she would die very young. That is why, when I was born, he told her everything that would happen to me during my life, especially of what I had to beware. He also instructed her how to teach me to interpret dreams and other signs as well.'

This was said with such firm belief that I was beginning to feel sure I could do nothing to make her come with us when suddenly an idea popped into my mind, which I felt was a legitimate deception to use against her superstition and in my straitened plight.

'Do you read well?' I asked her.

'No, I cannot read.'

'Then you would not be able to tell if the Teretz began with a "*tseh*" [2] if I were to show you the word.'

'Oh, then I might go. I am very pleased, too, as the "old man" told my mother that, when I was about fifty, I should come to live with a family which would be to me as my own, and in which I would stay to the end of my life. And I have wondered if it were you to whom he

[1] Hysteria subjects, mostly women, who very often scream monotonously the same word or syllable. The disease sometimes lasts for years and is considered incurable by the peasants and simple people, who say that the woman is possessed and tormented by the devil.

[2] A Russian letter of nearly the same sound as the 't.'

referred!' She looked searchingly at me, as though she would read something of my own future. I said I was sure we were the family, and we parted happily for the night.

As a matter of fact, Teretz really began with a 't,' and I had deliberately cheated the poor woman; but, though I had a little nervous feeling about it all, we arrived safely at Novorossisk two days later, in spite of the 'old man's' predictions. We had been tossed about terribly, the nurse was ill from the very first moment until we reached the jetty at Novorossisk, and the baby had nearly rolled out of her little basket; but those were mere trifles, for we had arrived at Novorossisk at last!

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE DRAMA OF THE GREENS

THE boat which made one trip a week to the Crimea was to sail in two or three days, so we went to stay with my sister and her husband, who were now living in Novorossisk with their five children. Her house is the liveliest I have ever seen, with all the children running about, shouting and playing the piano, with the nurses and governesses distracted from morning to night in their attempts to catch them and keep some order, and, above all, with my brother-in-law, who has a wonderful and enormous voice, singing as if there were no one else in the place. Though this distinctly suggests pandemonium let loose, there is no house I like to visit so much and none where I feel so relieved and happy. They are always bursting with energy and, at the time of our descent upon them, were on the *qui vive*, ready to leave the house at a moment's notice on account of an experience they had just had.

Shortly before our arrival, a ship, laden with ammunition and anchored in the harbor not far from the house, had caught fire. The explosions were really terrible, and it was quite by chance that the house was spared, for the shells fell all around it in the garden. My sister took all the children into the cellar, where they remained for several hours, until the bombardment was over. As there were many more ships with munitions aboard still in port, and as it had been proved that the fire was the

work of the Bolsheviks, there was every chance that the incident might be repeated.

When the day came on which our ship was to leave, the weather was terrible, with a northeaster raging. Every one urged us to wait, but we were in a hurry to be back in Yalta for the reason that Serge had received news that his brother was very ill in Kharkoff, and he consequently wished to settle me in Yalta in order to return immediately and bring him back from the front. The Volunteer Army had again begun to retire, so that everybody felt Kharkoff would very soon be in the hands of the Reds.

As I was willing to go under these circumstances, we started for the jetty about half an hour before the boat was to sail, driving through a whirling, blinding snow. Though we both felt rather anxious at the sight of the fury of the sea, we did not speak of it to each other. We were given a beautiful big cabin, as the ship was half empty through the failure of many passengers to arrive at the last moment. I immediately made the nurse lie down and lashed the baby's basket fast, so that it could not upset in case we were tossed about severely. Suddenly I heard a terrible crash, as the ship was thrown against something in such a way that I fell on the floor and the poor little baby rolled into the corner of the basket, face downward, and began to cry. The nurse, happy woman, was already fast asleep and never heard anything. With more crashes following, I feared that the steamer was breaking up. Shouts and running feet were heard on the deck and in the passageways.

At this moment Serge appeared, a bit pale but quite calm.

'I came to see if you were frightened.'

'Rather! Perhaps it is better after all to wait over another trip.'

'To tell you the truth, it is too late now.'

'What do you mean? We are still alongside the pier.'

'Yes, but — well, I think I had better tell you what has happened. The mooring lines gave way — you heard the crash a moment ago — so that the ship is being pounded against the jetty, which cuts off any possibility of going ashore.'

'And what will happen now?' I asked, as I felt a cold chill creeping up my back.

'One cannot know for certain. The captain has ordered full speed ahead into the wind, but until now the ship has not made a yard of headway, and . . .'

He was interrupted by a terrible crash.

'That is the jetty again,' he said, as he rushed out.

I confess that I felt quite hysterical, sitting there with the baby in my arms and ready to run on deck at any moment.

'It is lucky the nurse is asleep,' I thought, 'for she would be in a panic.'

For about half an hour there were no further crashes, and it seemed to me that I could no longer see the masonry of the pier through the port-hole. The night was so dark, and the baby slept so calmly in my lap, that I could not move to determine where we really were. At last Serge reappeared.

'Well?'

'Perhaps it will be all right, for the ship has worked away from the pier; yet there is no possibility of going out of the harbor, and, until we are out in the open sea, we can be sure of nothing.'

For four hours we sat thus and waited for the lights at the harbor entrance to appear, whereas normally it takes only from ten to fifteen minutes to run out of it. Then suddenly we realized we had succeeded because everything in the cabin turned topsyturvy, and the bed of the nurse looked as though it were going up toward the sky, while mine was falling into an abyss.

'At last,' sighed Serge, and we made the sign of the cross.

We were tossed about in the most terrible way, but this was all right and neither of us minded it. The nurse and the baby seemed to sleep even more soundly than usual through it all.

The next morning, when we came up on deck, the wind had fallen, and the great expanse of water was blue and calm. Wonderful are these sudden changes on the Black Sea! An old fisherman told me once that it had been named 'Black' because of its treacherous soul.

'You go out fishing,' he said, 'in beautiful weather, and suddenly a hurricane comes upon you from goodness knows where; and, if you have the supreme luck not to be drowned, you find five minutes later that the sea and the air are as calm as before. It is the soul of the sea, the black soul.'

As soon as we arrived in Yalta, and Serge had found quarters for me until the apartment which my mother was giving us in her house was ready, he immediately went back to Novorossisk and on to Kharkoff. He was too late, for my poor brother-in-law had died two days before his arrival. The town was in full flight, as the Reds were less than ten miles away.

After his return from this sad journey through the

mêlée of a retreat, we went to live in our new apartment and for some time enjoyed a calm and even life. Serge had secured the position of interpreter to the British fleet, which took him about a great deal and gave him work that he liked immensely.

Yalta was really a strange place, for it simply could not exist without some sort of a panic to feed upon. This came about probably from the fact that a large number of idle people, mostly invalids and the families of officers who were at the front, lived there.

About a fortnight after we arrived, the lists for the evacuation were begun again, just as in the previous year. It is true that the Volunteer Army was retiring, but it is also no less a fact that the Crimea was not overrun by the Bolsheviks until a year later. It was really too early to begin the panic, so that the *paniquers* found occupation in the interim in the frights afforded by the Greens. The Greens were bands of robbers and demoralized individuals, who were plundering everything and everybody. As they had their hiding places in the mountains of the Crimea, not only was it almost impossible to reach them, but also the troops were much too occupied at the front to bother about them.

One of the principal leaders of these bands, a certain 'Captain' Orloff, was a man half mad with drink and cocaine. He used to swoop down with his detachment into the small towns and bigger villages, rob the banks and post-offices, drink as much wine as he could, and try to make people enlist in his gang, even taking boys of fourteen and fifteen years back to the mountains with him.

One fine evening news was received in town that Orloff

was approaching, that he had, in fact, already robbed Aloushta, which was only twenty miles away, and was headed for Yalta. At this moment we had no troops at all in the town, and only five or six policemen besides the one hundred and fifty invalid officers who had formed themselves into an emergency guard. When the chief of the garrison telephoned to Sebastopol for help, all they sent us was a small sloop with a detachment of about eighty marines.

Even with these forces, however, everything would have been all right, and Orloff would have been pushed back into his mountains, if the general who had been sent over from Sebastopol to aid in the matter had not conceived the brilliant idea of going out to negotiate with the bandit chief, after issuing orders that no action should be taken until he returned. In one way he was right. He did not wish any bloodshed, but he did not take into account the entirely irregular working methods of the Greens. It turned out that, the moment he met Orloff to talk the matter over, he was made prisoner, and the Greens entered the town without a shot being fired, to the great astonishment and fury of everybody.

I was having tea on board the British destroyer Montrose, when, to our surprise and amazement, we saw them pass triumphantly along the quay and enter the unfortunate Hôtel de Russie, which always seemed to be the point of attraction for bad characters.

'I wonder what Serge is doing. I shall go and look for him,' I said, rising.

'I shall come with you. I am sure he is furious,' remarked a girl friend of mine, who had been invited on board with me.

When we arrived home, we found that Serge had run in for a moment about half an hour before and had immediately left again. We decided to hunt for him, and, knowing that he always gravitated toward excitement centers, went straight to the Hôtel de Russie. As we entered it, I found that it had taken on exactly the same appearance it bore the morning of our departure from Yalta, when Serge and I made our hare-brained expedition for a cup of coffee and discovered the place to be the headquarters of the Bolsheviks. Rifles and machine guns were lying everywhere, and armed men of wild appearance swaggered about. The proprietor looked frightened to death, while all his guests had disappeared and had probably locked themselves in their rooms.

'Let us go upstairs. I know where the office of the chief of the garrison is.'

We were held in the thrall of a silly, childish interest to see just what real robbers and brigands looked like. As we were mounting the stairs we met a pale and dishevelled woman running down and crying in an hysterical voice: 'They have robbed me; they have taken away my necklace!'

When we came up to the glass doors of the commandant's office and peeped in, we were dumbfounded at what we saw. There was Orloff, the brigand chief himself, talking loudly and excitedly to — Serge! Each had a revolver in his hand and was pointing it at the other's head.

'There you are! I told you we should find him here —!' I whispered in distress to my companion. Then we listened, and I grew cold at the words I heard.

'You will enlist in my detachment,' Orloff was saying.

'I certainly will not and, if you insist, I shall blow your brains out,' was Serge's answer.

'You won't have time, for I shall do that first or make you enlist, along with all the other officers.'

Both the men were looking intently into each other's eyes, and I could not but feel that they were choosing the moment to shoot.

'Not a man of them will come with you, you ——!' a scathing word came here.

Orloff paled a little under the insult.

'I shall send my men to seize you and hang you on the first lamp-post.'

'Just you have a try at it. Also, if I am not back at my post on board the British destroyer in half an hour, they will come to look for me. Keep this in mind too!'

Orloff grew silent for a moment, then dropped the hand with the revolver and looked at Serge with great interest.

'You really ought to join us. Having the White Devil in my command would just suit me, for I have heard a lot about you. What would you say, if I should appoint you second-in-command?'

Then happened that which I most feared, though I had been expecting it at every moment of the brush between the two men. I watched Serge's face grow red, then paler than I had ever seen it, and I realized that now he had lost all sense of danger.

He took a step nearer to Orloff, and, crouching like a wild beast ready to leap on its prey, stretched his revolver almost to the man's temple and said in a poorly controlled voice:

'No more, you dog! I won't allow a turncoat and brigand to insult me.'

The three men of Orloff's detachment who were in the room simply stood and stared at him. Orloff looked into the barrel of Serge's revolver, then at his face and took a step backward. A sigh of relief escaped us both, for Serge had won.

'Go to the devil!' Orloff ejaculated and turned toward the door.

'Stop!' ordered Serge.

The man drew up and looked back.

'Remember what I said just now. No officer of the garrison of Yalta will come with you. They met an hour ago and sent me to tell you this; so you had better clear out as quickly as possible, before you are hanged by us,' said Serge, who was quite calm again.

'You devil,' repeated Orloff, with a fierce look at him, and went out.

Serge came out, did not see us, and proceeded downstairs. We followed him at a distance, for I knew from long experience that it was better not to approach him at this moment. Also, he would have been terribly nervous to see me among the Greens.

He walked straight out of the hotel and then home. When I came to the house a few moments later, he asked me not to go about in the streets, as Orloff was in a fury with him and might easily revenge himself on me. I made him promise he would stay on board the Montrose for the night and saw him off on his way to the destroyer. I did not see him again for two days, though he telephoned several times to know if things were all right with me.

Many villas were robbed; the banks, the restaurants, and the big shops were closed by Orloff's orders, and his sentinels were posted at all the doors. This was done

in order to have time to remove without interruption everything worth taking, and several loaded carts were ready to start when Orloff somehow received news that a big detachment of the Volunteer Army was approaching Yalta from Sebastopol. Immediately his men and the carts were off for the mountains, while Orloff, who was drinking heavily at the time, stayed behind and left in a motor-car at the last moment. Some of his men, who had remained with him, had to rope him and put him in the car in order to get him away. They were nearly caught, but had the luck to escape, while the carts with the money and stolen goods were recaptured from the brigands and brought safely back to Yalta.

Later on Orloff joined the Bolsheviks and, so it was reported, fell a year afterwards during one of the attacks by the Red Army on the Crimean isthmus.

# CHAPTER XVIII

## NOMADS ONCE MORE

THE panic was slowly but constantly growing, the White Army was retiring, and every one began speaking about the possibility of the Bolsheviks again occupying the Crimea. We heard that the isthmus was but very lightly held and that the Reds had already reached Kherson. It turned out that our estate on the Dnieper was one of their concentration points.

With the receipt of such news, the panic grew momentarily worse, and evacuation lists were feverishly compiled, though no one knew through what agency the evacuation would this time be effected, as the British authorities had not committed themselves to assist again, nor was there any certainty as to the action of the French. The fear-inspired crowds that harassed the president and secretary of the Evacuation Committee with increasing questions, received nothing more than: 'Wait! The Crimea has not yet been taken.'

Many times the word flashed round that the isthmus had, however, been captured by the Reds and that Simferopol, the principal town of the Crimea, was full of retiring troops. This was in January of 1920, though the Crimea was not retaken by the Reds until the following November. Nevertheless, knowing nothing definitely at that time, we had to have iron nerves to be able to look into the pale, worried faces of the people all about us or to listen to their increasing discussion of the matter without succumbing to the general panic.

Then came the news that Novorossisk was being evacuated of all women, children, and invalids and that my sister with her five children, as well as my sister-in-law with her six little ones, had left for Constantinople on board a British transport. Add to this the fact that out of the eleven children some were ill with whooping-cough and others with measles, and you have an indication of our feeling that there must have been something desperate in the situation, when their mothers had decided to take them away under such circumstances.

At the news of the Novorossisk evacuation the orgy of departure from the Crimea began. People paid thousands and thousands of roubles to secure places for their families somewhere in the holds of the Greek, Turkish, Italian, and other ships which were coming in veritable fleets into the Yalta harbor. I presume some of the captains and owners amassed fortunes during these months of panic, as no one ever bargained over the prices asked, but simply sold some jewelry or other valuables, if he or she had not money enough to meet the demand. It was terrible and, at times, repulsive to see these people, who were dominated by one sole idea and passion — flight! Yet, on the other hand, they certainly had real foundation for their fears, as most of them would have been shot or tortured if they had fallen into the hands of the Bolsheviks, so that it was with them a question of life and the struggle to preserve it.

Practically all of us refugees have passed through this crisis and have had our nerves strained to the breaking point by it, and we know much more poignantly how sweet life looks when it is about to be taken away than do those who sit calmly in their homes and lead a safe,

normal existence. And yet so many of these fortunate, normal individuals look at us incredulously and suspiciously when we recount to them some episode or experience of the Revolution! Sometimes I am seized by a furious wish to have them go through all we have experienced and then to talk it over with them afterwards and remark to them, as they have occasionally said to us: 'Fancy, what wonderful adventures! How interesting it must have been to go through it all!' — just as if one were discussing some exciting cinema.

I wonder that they do not grasp that it means the wreck of our lives, the overturning of all civilized standards, and for us young people, for whom life had just begun, premature age, haunted by such sorrows and griefs as should hardly be the portion of ten lives instead of one — all because we have seen wild beasts stalking our country in the guise of men.

My eldest sister, who was living in Yalta, began to grow very nervous, a state which is virulently infectious and would certainly have overwhelmed me also if it had not been for the necessity of keeping calm for Serge's sake. One fine day she declared she could not stand it any longer and that she had to go. After that decision she began hurrying everybody about, until we saw her off two days later.

She had paid an enormous sum for a place two meters square in the hold of a Greek ship, had arranged a camp bed for her four little girls to sleep on, and then shared in turns with her husband and the nurse the opportunity of sleeping on the floor. Serge had tried to dissuade her from such precipitate and ill-organized flight, promising her he would make better provision for them if she

would only wait a little while; but she would not listen.

They spent ten days on board this craft, which was crammed with passengers and was held up by the quarantine authorities when they arrived at Constantinople because of some suspicious cases that had developed on board. To this day my sister shivers whenever she has occasion to speak of this ten days of hell.

We, however, stayed on, for Serge had just been appointed aide-de-camp to the chief of the garrison, and we never even discussed the possibility of leaving. My mother remained with us, knowing that we should fold our tent only at the last moment. For her it was the most terrible tragedy to be compelled finally to abandon Russian soil; in fact, she told me several times that she would have preferred to remain there and take the consequences if it had not been for us, her children.

At about this time the specter of famine was beginning to raise its head in Yalta. Though the ration of bread, only black, was more or less sufficient, one could find practically no meat, no sugar, no milk, no butter other than a sort of mess concocted out of cocoanuts, and no vegetables of any kind. You had to pay a fortune to a man for just the information as to where five or ten potatoes, not more, could be bought. The dish we had every day was a kind of gruel made of beans or maize, supplemented by fish. This single form of flesh food we had was served at breakfast, luncheon, and dinner; the soup was made out of it; it was fried, boiled, or disguised in a vinaigrette; but it was always fish and fish alone! Moreover, it was always just one kind of fish, the so-called '*kamsa*,' a small, strong-smelling variety that had appeared in

great shoals near Yalta and that was being caught in thousands and thousands of pounds by the fishermen.

Probably these half-famine conditions had an undermining influence on the character of my household, as quarrels between Dunia and the nurse arose at every pretext, and sometimes without any pretext at all. Dunia was jealous of Theodosia, for she would have liked so much to have been allowed to take care of the baby; just as the nurse was jealous of Dunia, knowing, as she did, how much we liked our faithful old retainer and also what an exceptional position she occupied with her privilege of dictating to all of us. Both the women are very determined and obstinate and neither wished to give in in order to reach some peace agreement. Whenever one of them came to me to complain of the other, I told her simply that it did not concern me in the least and that they had to talk it over by themselves without drawing me into the affair, at which they were always much disappointed.

Sometimes, however, as I was sitting in my living-room, I loved to listen to the sort of monologue which they carried on, for neither would speak to or address the other at such times, but would stand looking out of the window and make pointed remarks as though no one else were in the room.

'Oh!' Dunia once began — she always had to be first in everything — 'Oh, how can people allow any one to go about with such a huge stomach and not make her wear corsets. It is absolutely indecent! I really wonder!'

'You darling little thing,' the nurse immediately said to the astonished-looking baby, 'you are a lucky child to have a nurse with a bit of stomach. How could she hold

you comfortably in her arms if she had not something to support your body, you little dear?'

'Oh, just a bit of stomach!' Dunia remarked ironically, addressing the entrance door and marching out of the room.

The nurse had one very distinctly good point, in that she loved to wash. Every day she rubbed out heaps of the baby's linen and frequently pieces that did not actually require it. Naturally, I approved of this, but Dunia was furious about it for some unknown reason and tried to persuade me that Theodosia was wearing out the baby's clothes by washing them too often.

When she saw she could not influence me to stop it, she began to act by herself. She would go ten or fifteen times past the door of the dark little room in which the nurse was washing and would blow out the candle, as if by accident, or would say that the water was running into the corridor, doing her best to make the nurse angry. Once, when she had succeeded, they had a row, and the nurse told Dunia that she liked to wash because she saw what needed laundering, as *she* did not wear black spectacles! This touched a sore spot in the older woman and set her sobbing hysterically for some hours. After this outbreak she ceased her worrying tactics and simply disregarded Theodosia.

Incredible as it may seem, it is quite true and also typical of these two women that for four years they never said a word to each other, and this, also, in spite of the fact that they have seen no relatives or friends to talk with since 1920, when we left Yalta for Constantinople and France! It was only last spring that Dunia came to the nurse and asked her forgiveness for every-

thing. This happened because she was going to confession, and with us in preparation for this it is the custom to ask one's worst enemies to pardon one and to forget all differences. The nurse was so bewildered at such high-mindedness — Dunia had never done anything like this in previous years — that she immediately began to weep, cried all her tears out, and asked pardon in turn, so that now they are quite good friends, and, though sometimes the pointed remarks come again into the discourse, they are never so murderously venomous as before.

'Do you think we shall have to go? Do you think the Crimea will be retaken by the Reds?' These were the questions which I had begun to ask Serge.

He never really gave a direct answer, because the same terrible prospect, the necessity for leaving Russian soil, always rose before him. Though many of the Yalta inhabitants had gone and the town looked half deserted, we still cherished the hope that perhaps we might be able to remain permanently.

A little later, while Serge had gone off to Novorossisk and Ekaterinodar on official business, I heard the report that Novorossisk was being bombarded and that the White Army would probably be evacuated to the Crimea. I grew anxious about him and tried to hope the news was not reliable, for this meant practically the collapse of everything, as the White Army could not possibly exist in the Crimea, where there was nothing left to eat. The only way out lay in the help of the Allies; and whether this aid would be forthcoming or effective no one could say.

The next morning, when, as I was sitting at breakfast, I glanced out of the window at the bay, which was half

hidden by a tree, I could not see the funnels of the Montrose in their usual place in the picture. Going quickly out on the balcony, I discovered that the destroyer had gone and that the harbor was empty of all craft.

'What can it mean? Where are the two Greek ships that were not to sail until this evening?' were the questions I was anxiously asking myself.

Then I telephoned to the headquarters of the chief of the garrison and received the news, official this time, that Novorossisk was being evacuated, that the Montrose had gone there in response to a wireless message, and that all the ships of whatever nationality which happened to be in the harbors of Crimea were being requisitioned to take the troops, munitions, and refugees away! I gave thanks to Heaven that we had the fortune to be spared from going through the nightmare of that evacuation.

When the Montrose returned to Yalta from its Novorossisk trip, Serge was on board her and came home immediately after he had rendered his report to the commandant. By his pale and serious face I knew that something grave was brewing.

'What is it?' I asked anxiously.

'You will have to leave with the baby and your mother day after to-morrow.'

'For where?'

'Constantinople.'

'And you?'

'I shall remain here.'

'I shall not go without you,' I answered. 'And then I do not see why we must go at all just now, when the Crimea is full of troops and the staff have decided to defend it. You know yourself that there is no immediate danger in remaining here.'

'I wish you to leave, because it is probably the last chance for you to go with any guarantee of good accommodations. Captain C—— has just told me that this is the last British ship coming for refugees, that he has arranged for this one with great difficulty, and that after this he can be certain of nothing. You must go.'

'I shall not go without you,' I repeated. 'You are not bound to stay when you are an invalid; for they have no right to keep you in active service, you know it well.'

'I intend to stay because I am the aide-de-camp to the chief of the garrison and feel that I have no moral right to leave.'

'Then I shall not go,' I repeated.

I generally submit readily to Serge's suggestions, but this was quite another matter. One must never part from people that are dear to one in such surroundings and be beyond communication with them by letter or telegram. Serge just looked at me with despair and walked out, certain that I should not change my mind.

Five minutes after the door closed, I had, however, ordered the packing to be started at once. I knew that Serge could not come back before evening and that I consequently had the whole day to act, and felt it was better that everything should be packed in case I found out that we really had to go. First of all I went to my mother and told her what Serge had said. We agreed that she should be ready for any emergency and that I should at once make all the necessary inquiries.

Then, after lunch, I went out. The attractive little health resort had in several hours quite changed its character. The streets and quay were crowded with soldiers, tired and hungry-looking, who walked about with

distress written plain on their faces, trying to find shelter and food. In the harbor rode the fleet of ships that had brought them, while alongside the jetty lay three transports flying the yellow quarantine flag.

'Typhus!' I thought. What else could it be? We did not bother about other illnesses at that time, for typhus was the only one we thought about, as it carried off ninety per cent of those who contracted it. And these transports were moored to the jetty, where every one could freely go, so that the disease was already practically in our midst.

As I went along the quay, I had to pass close to the market. I heard shouts coming from this direction and, turning into a side street, arrived at the square where it was situated. I simply had to see everything in its real color. The responsibility for my mother and the baby was heavy upon me and, if something had happened to them because I grew capricious and refused to leave, it would have been terrible for me then and ever after.

The market was a dreadful sight. Crowds of soldiers had invaded it, had taken everything, and were eating like hungry wolves around a kill. True, they paid for it all — they even paid too much in the currency they had, the notes of the Volunteer Army; but the merchants did not wish to accept this currency and kept demanding Romanoff notes. Of these the soldiers had none, as they received their pay in Volunteer Army paper.

I returned to the jetty when it was growing dark, never having noticed how long I had been wandering about the town. The pier was deserted, except for two or three Greek sailors, who were laughing and joking about something. Their laugh was a terrible discord and cut me to

the quick. Though they tried to stop me, I hurried on past them to carry out my intention of finding Captain C——. I knew that Serge would be on the Montrose at this hour, but I wished to see the captain alone and receive his own personal opinion, without Serge influencing him for or against our departure. So I asked one of the sailors to tell the captain I desired to see him alone, and, five minutes later, I was ushered into his own wardroom.

What I saw on entering made me decide immediately to leave Yalta, for Captain C—— had changed more completely during his three days in Novorossisk than I had ever imagined a person could change in so short a time. I was accustomed to seeing him calm to his very finger-tips, cheerful and reserved, and looked upon him as a man who would never lose his temper or grow nervous. Yet on this day, the moment I saw him, I knew I had been mistaken. As he sat there looking at me with haunted eyes and talking as I had never heard him talk before, telling me of all he had witnessed at Novorossisk — mothers giving away their children to be saved and staying behind with their husbands; men killing their wives at the approach of the Reds; some giving way under the strain and going mad; others jumping into the water to avoid being made prisoners and tortured by the enemy — I felt cold horror freezing my soul and brain.

Captain C—— rose and paced up and down the small wardroom.

'Oh, go, please go! Don't stay to see this hell! It will happen here also, I feel sure of it.' He stopped suddenly before me.

'It is terrible to go.'

'I know it is, but it will be worse if you stay, and you will never forgive yourself if something happens to those near you through your desire to remain.'

'I know I should never forgive myself; yet it is heart-breaking to go, perhaps forever.'

We were silent for a moment, then I jumped up, unable any longer to remain calmly in one spot. I realized we had to go, but felt, too, that I must find work immediately that would help me to forget it, as much as one could forget such an insistent fact.

I simply ran all the way from the ship until I came to my mother. Though I cannot recall now how or what I told her, yet I do remember how immediately her attitude calmed me.

'It is Fate, my dear. Let us hope we may come back soon,' I remember her saying to me.

The servants had been packing all this time, and now Serge soon appeared.

'I am glad you have decided to go, but don't pack my things, as I am staying here.'

'Oh, no,' I told him calmly, 'you are coming with us.'

'I can't, I told you.'

'You must come with us to Constantinople, settle us somewhere, and then come back if you feel it is your duty; but now we shall go together.'

He was silent, and the conversation turned to some other topic. I knew well he would not leave of his own accord, but I felt I could do as I wished in this case and that nothing could stop me.

In the evening, without saying a word to Serge about it, I telephoned to the chief of the garrison and told him

I should like to see him. Half an hour later, to the great surprise of my husband, who was on duty there, I made my appearance at headquarters and was immediately escorted to the private office of the chief. I saw that Serge had a strong desire to enter with me, but — discipline before everything, and he had not been asked to come in. And then I talked! I don't remember at all what I said, nor whether it was logical or not, but what I do remember distinctly is that Serge was called into the room a little later and told that he would have to escort us to Constantinople, as well as the family of the chief. Discipline again took charge, and Serge simply saluted, answered 'Yes, sir,' and marched out of the room. I followed, exhausted but happy after this interview. I had put all my heart into it, all my energy, and had won.

The next day there was a turmoil of packing, packing, for Dunia was determined to take everything in spite of my protests. But after all, what could it matter what she took or left?

Early the following morning the Rio Negro, a big transport, arrived. A car came to take us to the jetty, and half an hour later we were on board. We were not many as we gathered on deck, some seventy in all, counting grown-ups and children, and were all friends or relatives.

There was a delay, for somebody was late; yet the signal for our departure was given all too soon, as every one of us wished for a dozen more delays and wanted to stay close to that Russian soil, even though we knew we must soon leave it or rest within it, if hatred-laden enemies should prove considerate enough to cradle us beneath the sod instead of leaving us a prey to wandering pariahs.

And, as the Rio Negro broke her contact with the land, there was not one face among us down which the tears had not found their way.

When shall we come back to Russia, the black soil, the music, the churches, and the life of the plains?

## CHAPTER XIX

### A CAMP IN AN EMBASSY

When we dropped anchor midstream in the Bosphorus, it was two days since we had left Yalta and had watched the last headland of Russia sink inexorably below the horizon, just as the whole of the country seemed to be plunging itself into a sea of blood that would engulf and swallow it up for all of us.

After the very excitable French official of the Constantinople Quarantine Service finally accepted from the captain our standing as independent individuals with means to live either in Constantinople or to be landed at Lemnos, as we might choose, I went down to our cabin and told the news to my mother. The baby was fast asleep, while the maids and nurses were somewhere on deck.

'Now, first of all,' said my mother, 'we must get some money at once.'

'Serge has promised to come on board just as soon as possible, and I am sure that I saw the Montrose after we had entered the Bosphorus,' I answered, for Serge had not traveled with us, but had made the journey on board the destroyer.

'I have about twelve pounds in currency besides the check for fifteen hundred pounds, you know,' continued my mother, 'and I should like to have you cash this your first trip on shore.'

Just at this moment there was a knock, and Serge appeared. We went on deck, and he proposed that we go

off at once. Ten minutes later we were sitting in the motor-launch of the Montrose which had brought him, and were headed for the shore. I had my mother's check in my pocket.

'We shall have lunch first and then go to the Crédit Lyonnais,' suggested Sergè.

'Won't that take too long?'

'No, for the captain told me that all of you were to remain for another day on board the Rio Negro, as they are not sailing until to-morrow night.'

After an extraordinarily expensive lunch in a little restaurant, we went to the bank to present the check of the man in Novorossisk to whom we had sold wool from our estates some two months ago and who had arranged that the money was to be paid us at the Crédit Lyonnais in Constantinople, where he said he had an account. I handed the check to a paying teller, who turned it over and over, consulted several books, and handed it back to me, saying: 'The name is unknown.'

'Unknown? What do you mean? It is impossible!'

'Quite possible. I have looked through all our books. Perhaps they might know something about it in the Stamboul or Galata branch.'

We took a cab and hurried to Galata, both of us having the feeling that something was wrong.

'Unknown,' we heard for the second time. 'Try at Stamboul,' and off we rushed to Stamboul.

'Unknown,' was the answer there, with the advice added: 'Try Galata or Pera.'

'But we have been there already.'

'Then it is a worthless check,' the man answered quite calmly.

We had been cheated. The man had never been known at the bank, and we had only about eight pounds left to care for the seven of us! This was staggering news, indeed. We went back to the jetty, then off to the Montrose to take definite leave of the captain and officers, who had been such good friends to us during the past months, and then returned to the Rio Negro. The deck was deserted. We went into the saloon, but nobody was there.

'How strange,' I remarked, 'that there is no one about anywhere.'

I went below to our cabins, found the doors wide open . . . and the family and luggage gone.

As I heard somebody calling me, I turned and saw the wife of the chief of the Yalta garrison hurrying toward me.

'They have gone ashore and asked me to tell you.'

'Why? What has happened?'

'You see, the captain received orders to sail this evening instead of to-morrow, so that they had to leave.'

'Do you know where I shall find them?'

'No; none of them knew where they were going. They were in such a hurry that they just collected the luggage as quickly as possible and left.'

I was anxious, for my mother, with the eight-months-old baby, the three servants, and the enormous quantity of luggage, had gone ashore with practically no money — she had kept only two pounds — and without knowing where to go.

We hurriedly returned to the launch and went at full speed for the Top-Hané jetty. For about half an hour we searched up and down the quay around the ships that were moored there and then at last caught sight of a dis-

tant group of people with quantities of luggage coming ashore from one of the ferryboats that plied along and across the Bosphorus. As we hurried toward them, I heard a voice calling: 'Here we are, come here!'

We jumped out of the launch and discovered my mother standing in the middle of a conglomerate mass of luggage, the nurse, with the baby asleep on her lap, sitting on a trunk, and Dunia — always the same unchanging Dunia — rushing about to pick out our belongings from the heaps of other people's luggage, talking Russian to the Turks, French, and English, and flying into a fury when they did not understand what she meant.

At this precise moment she was holding a *hamal* by the sleeve and telling him to take the trunk with the initials 'A. M.' and green stripe and put it with the rest of our luggage. The man simply stared at her and tried several times to shake her off, unable as he was to understand a word of Russian and probably thinking she was mad.

'*Ex-tra-ordinar!*' I heard the old thing say — 'Is it not in good pure Russian I speak to you? Why *can't* you understand me, you pig-headed fellow?'

When we heard this we had to accept the humor of the situation, for it was really impossible not to be more cheerful at sight of her. After Serge dragged the trunk to its place, Dunia sat herself upon it and never moved thereafter; for, now that we had arrived and all the things were gathered together, her responsibility was over and nothing could disturb her. Where, how, and when we were to go did not concern her in the least. She would follow us to the very end of the world without a word of protest.

By a most incredible caprice of fortune, we suddenly discovered a cousin of mine, who was a secretary at the Embassy, driving up in his car. He immediately took us all away, leaving Serge to look after the luggage. When we arrived at the Embassy, the impression we had of it was that not another person could find space there among the crowd of refugees. My cousin took us upstairs and invited us to spend the night in one of his rooms in spite of the fact that they were a family of six themselves and had only two rooms left to them. We had no option but to accept his great kindness, as it was impossible to find other quarters at this late hour.

The next morning Serge and I raced about the town in search of some sort of accommodations and eventually succeeded in finding one small room in the Hôtel Continental — that is, Serge found this, and, though I had not seen it, we decided to move immediately to assure ourselves of holding it.

The hotel appeared to be rather decent, quite clean and quiet. We climbed up and up to the very roof, until it seemed there was no possibility of going higher. When the staircase came to an end at the sixth floor, the manager then led us into a little side passage, opened the door, and invited us to mount a ladder. We found the room situated in what corresponded to the seventh floor, and for it we had to pay nine Turkish lira — the then equivalent of one hundred and ten francs — per day.

As there could be no question of my mother's making this ascent more than once a day, and as it was impossible for the nurse to carry the baby up and down as well, Serge and I made the trip at least twenty times between dawn and dark to bring the water and everything else

that was needed, as well as all the meals. And, worst of all, we had to leave Dunia and her niece, who was my mother's maid, to live at the Embassy, over which Dunia flew into such a temper that she refused to have any food for thirty-six hours after her dethronement. This is her usual way of punishing me!

At this time the Embassy was a wonderful and extraordinary sight. All the beautiful salons, as well as the ballroom, were full of refugees, who not only slept but did their cooking there. I loved to go into the place, if for no other reason than just to see the wonderful spirit in which they all were meeting their new problems of life. I remember one room specially, in which six families were living, all of them friends or relatives of ours. To be more 'at home,' as they put it, they had divided up the salon into six parts by hanging sheets as partitions. Sometimes I was really sorry I could not just slip over, by myself of course, and live with them to enjoy some of their amusing experiences and their unfailing good humor. All sorts of *contretemps* and badinage marked the day. Sometimes a sheet would fall, revealing a household in all stages of *déshabille*. Sometimes a family group would begin to quarrel, and all the neighbors would join in with such scathing humor that the dispute would end in a whirl of laughter. Also with the cooking such fantastic things would happen! One of them would try to prepare something exceptional to eat, but, as no one knew much about even the most rudimentary cooking, the promised culinary wonder nearly always turned out to be a quite uneatable product, and the unfortunate cook was teased about it for some time afterwards.

One afternoon at about four o'clock I arrived at the Embassy and went up to that particular room in search of a friend who was living there, but I found the salon empty. I stood for a second on the threshold and was just turning to go when I heard a strange little sound behind one of the sheets.

'Is any one at home?' I inquired.

'Who are you?' came back in answer. When I gave my name, the voice continued: 'Oh, you may come in, but I did not want any of the others to see me!'

I lifted the sheet and stepped into her improvised room. There at the farther end was an elderly lady, sitting on a traveling bag with her back toward me. She seemed very busy, yet I could not see what she was doing. I only remarked that on the floor at her right was a newspaper with a full equipment of shaving-articles gathered upon it — a stick of shaving-soap, a brush in a bowl of soapy water, and an open safety-razor box.

'You are all alone?' I asked her, being very curious as to what she was doing, but hesitant about moving forward to spy on her operations.

'Yes, it is my turn.'

'Your turn at what?' I found myself forced to ask.

'At cooking for the lot of us,' came the answer, together with the quite special little sound which I had noticed as I entered the room and which I now knew to be the sound of the razor. I could not stand it any longer.

'But what are you doing?'

'Preparing the dinner, of course. I told you I was the cook for to-day and I want to give them a surprise. What we have had for the past week has been such uneatable stuff, you know.'

I came up to her and stopped short when I saw what she was doing. Such a fit of laughter shook me that I had to sit down, for there she had a partially lathered chicken lying on her knees and, with an expression of unutterable disgust distorting her face, was shaving it! When she saw my entire loss of control, she joined me and could not stop laughing herself.

'But it is not thus that you do it,' I explained, when we calmed down a bit. 'You must pick it, not shave it!'

'I know, but I tried to and could not do it, and so thought it a good idea to shave it.'

'But you will never be able to eat it with the quills still sticking in the flesh!'

'Oh, I have had enough of it all. I've been sitting here for two hours already trying to do my best; and if the others are going to be capricious about the meat, well — they will just have to be satisfied with the broth!'

## CHAPTER XX

### TO PRINKIPO!

On the third day after our arrival, both my sister and my sister-in-law came over from Prinkipo to see us, bringing terrible news, indeed. The five children of my sister as well as all six of my sister-in-law's had gone through whooping-cough, measles, and finally inflammation of the lungs. One of them, a little girl of five, had died and had been buried on the very day of our arrival in Constantinople; while the others were still very ill. The worst feature of all during this period was the absolute impossibility of communicating with one another. My poor brother, who stayed behind with the Volunteer Army in the Crimea, knew of the death of his child only a month after it had occurred.

They told me that Prinkipo was infested with every kind of disease. A terror seized me, as I looked at my baby. I knew full well that we could not go on living at Constantinople and that it was only a question of time when we must face all that Prinkipo meant.

Two days after their visit my mother went over to live with my sister on the island, but we tried to stay behind as long as possible in the hope of arranging some way out of it all. As we had no money, there was no option but to go into one of the buildings the British authorities had provided for the refugees, which meant living together with crowds of other people and in the midst of all the epidemics.

Before our departure I looked about for an opportu-

nity to sell some pearls from my necklace. The Constantinople dealers, mostly Armenians, knowing well the position in which all the refugees were, offered such low prices that it was out of the question to think of selling anything to them. I remember one of them offering me twenty-five lira for six of my best and largest pearls! Then we had a bit of luck when some one told me of a Paris jeweler who had just arrived in Constantinople and was giving fair prices for things he liked. I went directly to him and received his offer of one thousand lira for these same six pearls.

The day we moved to the island Serge took the luggage to the boat, leaving me in charge of the nurse, the baby, and Dunia. It was Easter Eve, and we wished very much to be with all our people for the midnight service. Consequently, when we took our places in the carriage, we still had a rather large number of handbags and parcels. Before we were halfway to the jetty, a number of *hamals* were already running beside us to have first chance at the luggage.

Finally we drew up at the Galata pier from which the *sherket* (boat) for Prinkipo left and were immediately surrounded by the *hamals*, who were talking excitedly, quarreling between themselves, and trying to snatch the handbags away from the exasperated Dunia. Then, as the quarreling among the men was becoming wilder at every moment, I took several bags in one hand, helped the nurse and the baby out of the carriage, and, telling Dunia to follow us, tried to make my way to the jetty.

At the sight of their prey escaping from them, the *hamals* stopped quarreling, sprang toward us, and jerked the bags out of Dunia's and my hands. At the same mo-

ment I heard Theodosia's cry for help and turned around just in time to see that a disgusting-looking, half-naked Turk had the baby under his arm and was running back toward the entrance with the fat nurse making a poor attempt to catch him.

This was too much! I lost all control and, forgetting everybody and everything except the frightened face of my poor little baby, I flew after the man, caught him by what remained of his shirt, and had the good fortune to stop him. Then we struggled, I trying to take the baby away from him without injuring her and he holding on with his greater strength. Suddenly I bethought myself of Serge's bamboo stick which I was carrying and gave him as hard a blow as I could on the arm, so that, with something like a groan, he let go of the baby and would have dropped her on the pavement if the nurse and I had not caught her just in time. At this juncture Serge appeared, and you never saw a man run as that *hamal* did to put himself beyond my husband's clutches.

Following this rather disturbed departure, everything went smoothly. We arrived at Prinkipo, proceeded to the hotel, where my sister had secured a good room for us, and settled ourselves quite comfortably.

As Serge wished to go back to the Crimea at once, we set about looking for a small detached house, where we could protect our little one as well as possible from the various epidemics that were sweeping the island.

We found a place a few days later, though it was so small that even our Batum bungalow seemed a palace in comparison. Even so, there were three rooms and a kitchen in the cellar. In each room there was a bed, a washstand, and one chair — a second one would have

found no place. There was also a little hall with a table and two chairs, where we could have our meals. Diminutive as it was, it was all we needed and was so clean and so cheap that we took it immediately.

I shall always remember the wholesome, quiet time we had in this little house. It was situated immediately behind the Greek village of Prinkipo and belonged to a peasant named Pietro Franguli. All around us there were peasants, remarkably nice people, always ready to help, always gay, singing all the time and chattering in their native tongue with such *verve* that we could not help admiring and liking them, though at first they seemed rather noisy. There was something attractive and bright in these peasant surroundings which had certainly a good influence on our own spirits.

But soon the cloud came when Serge had to go. One morning he received a message through the Naval Base that his ship was about to start. I was anxious at the idea of parting from him at this time and in such far from congenial surroundings. He went, and the days seemed very long to me. To keep myself occupied, I roamed about the island, visited my mother and sisters, and tried to learn something of the Greek and Turkish languages, in order to be able to understand better the life around me.

The weather had become terribly hot, and the heat brought with it many inconveniences. Above all, remaining indoors grew quite unbearable, as the rooms in our house had no proper ceilings and the iron roof became so hot that one could not breathe the air inside the house till long after the sun had left it and the cool of the evening had tempered it down. The poor baby, although

she wore only a pair of bathing-trunks, was all the day beaded with perspiration.

The nurse and I decided to keep her out of doors as much as possible, though that proved very difficult right at the outset, for there was not one tree or any other shade to be found on this part of the island. To expose her to the heat for more than a few minutes at a time meant to burn her skin at once, so that we had to take her out for short intervals many times during the day and thus accustom her by degrees to the burning rays of the sun. A fortnight later the fair-haired little thing became as dark as an Indian child of the Ganges and, together with the nurse, stayed from morning till night under the glaring sun out on a hillock where there was not a single tree and where the grass had been burned brown since the early part of May.

The second great inconvenience was the vermin life — the mosquitoes, the rats, and the 'unmentionable guests.' I had some very serious talks with Pietro Franguli and his wife about these undesirable habitués of the house, but was each time quite astounded and baffled by their apathy and their extraordinary point of view.

'The house is full of them!' I would say.

'Oh, yes, they appear with the first hot days.'

'But nobody can sleep; it is really terrible.'

'You will grow accustomed to them in a month or two.'

'How can you possibly go on living in a house and not try to destroy them?'

'It is useless; they are the special *indigènes* of the Turkish wood, and you cannot find a single wooden house in Turkey that is free from them.'

There was nothing to say after this, though their *indigènes* were certainly most common ones and acted as such.

Then came the rats! Never before had I seen such huge beasts. They seemed as big as large kittens, and not only were they quite unafraid of people, but they were even very aggressive and defiant. One specially impudent fellow was found every morning sitting on the kitchen stove, from which the cook had to drive it away by force. The awful thing would jump about from side to side trying to bite the poor girl until it received a kick or a blow that sent it to cover for the day; and this went on, if you please, till Serge came back and killed it. Other members of the tribe ran all over the rooms and the beds the whole night, and, though we killed as many of them as possible, there always seemed to be a score of them left. I had to wrap the baby's cradle and my own bed in thick mosquito netting in order to protect us from the disgusting beasts.

Prinkipo, as well as the neighboring Princes Islands, was crowded with Russian refugees at this time. There are four islands in the group: Prinkipo, which was held and administered by the British; Khalki, by the French; Antigona, by the Italians; and Protti, by the Americans. Prinkipo is the largest of the four and gave shelter to thousands of us quartered there. The British requisitioned houses and hotels and distributed quarters as well as rations to everybody.

My sister and sister-in-law had arrived with the first party of refugees and had received an exceptionally nice house. My other sister, who turned up some weeks later, had been given two small rooms in a place in the outskirts

of the town; while we, when we finally arrived, had been offered one room for the six of us. By this time Prinkipo was really crammed and was Russian from end to end. All the Greek and Turkish merchants were learning to speak our tongue; the hospital, though British in name, was Russian from the head doctor to the most junior nurse; the restaurants served Russian dishes, while their orchestras played Russian music; an Orthodox church had been opened, where a finely trained choir sang, and, though the Greek cathedral stood right in the next street, many of the Greeks attended our services.

Serge had already been away for a month, and I had not received a single message from him. I was very anxious and tried to send him letters through all sorts of channels, as there was no proper postal service to the Crimea and one had consequently to entrust letters to some one going there. Then one day, while I was sitting by the window reading, I saw a carriage drive up to the door and Serge himself step out of it. He was greenishly pale and shook like a man in a chill, in spite of the fact that the day was terribly hot. The moment I reached him, I saw that he was unquestionably ill.

'I had to get away,' he explained, 'as you can see from the state I am in. The doctor said it was a bad attack of malaria and sent me off for a change of air.'

He shook so violently that he spoke with difficulty, and, when a cup of hot tea was brought to him, he could not hold it steady enough to drink it. I went immediately for the doctor, who came, examined Serge, took his temperature, and was exceedingly perplexed.

'I don't know what it is,' he explained to me as he came out. 'It's not malaria, at any rate, as the fever

would have been high, instead of which his temperature is quite normal just now. Come and fetch me if there is any change, even during the night.'

I cannot say that this was very comforting! I asked Serge to go to bed at once, but he refused, saying: 'I feel I am alive when I sit up, and dying when I lie down.'

He seemed to be much irritated about everything and toward evening began to talk such nonsense that I realized he was becoming delirious, though the fever did not go up. After a sleepless night he became quite normal again, though very weak, and this continued for three days, and we hoped he was recovering when suddenly a relapse set in. He woke in the night in such a paroxysm of shaking that he could not utter a single word. This time I knew that the fever was going up at every moment and, dressing quickly, ran for the doctor. It turned out to be typhus, and an exceptionally violent case.

For days his temperature stood at such a high point that the doctor was very anxious about him and quite incredulous that any one could run such a fever and continue to live. Then at last it was over, and Serge, laughing at his own helplessness, was allowed to sit up and later to attempt several steps around the room.

I did not see much of the baby during these days and did not go out myself, but sometimes wondered when different ones among our neighbors came in three or four times a day to bring flowers and ask about Serge's health. I could not understand why we had suddenly grown so popular among the Greeks, with whom we could not even converse. But the first time I went out for a walk with the baby and the nurse, I realized that it was the baby who had become popular, not we grown-ups!

To every one we met the little one would say: '*Kalimera*' (good-day), and, looking extremely dignified, would touch her forehead and heart with her right hand, in accordance with the manner of greeting among the natives.

'*Kalimera*, Alexandritza,' the people would greet her in answer.

All the village seemed to know the baby, and every one tried to amuse her in some way or other. One day she would come back with fruit in her hands, another with flowers; once she brought in an enormous head of lettuce. Then I would catch a glimpse of her riding on a donkey and on one occasion sighted a dog running down the street, with a village woman panting along beside him and holding the laughing baby's hand as she straddled his back.

But all this had unfortunately to be stopped. The baby was limited to saying '*Kalimera*' and to tapping her forehead and heart as much as she wished, but I had to forbid the nurse to allow her to accept any presents whatever or even to approach the people of the village, all for a very sound reason. We were at the end of July, the place was full of fruit, the heat was terrible, and the water had a disagreeable taste suggestive of stagnancy. After midday you could pump as much as you chose at any of the wells of the village, but you would not bring up a drop of the precious liquid. We felt sure that some sort of epidemic would break out, and our fears were unfortunately justified.

One evening I saw one of the women across the street running about and asking for something from the neighbors. Then she came up to our house and knocked

at the door. As I opened it, she loosed a flood of excited words upon me. She had always appeared to me so young and beautiful and radiant with happiness that her pallor and anxious expression struck me at once. I tried my best to understand her, but caught in all her sentences only the one word 'Nikolaki,' which she was constantly repeating. Nikolaki was her little child of six or seven months whom she adored with all her soul, often dancing with him in her arms for hours up and down their little garden.

All that I could guess was that something had certainly happened to Nikolaki, and, taking the woman by the hand, I hurried across the street with her and entered their house. The room into which she led me was dark, with only a taper burning before the ikon in the corner. Before I could make out anything else, the woman began sobbing loudly:

'Nikolaki, Nikolaki!'

'Where is he?' I asked, turning to her. As she pointed toward the bed, I approached and saw the little child lying on it, pale and motionless, with wide-open eyes. I thought at first he was dead, but, feeling his forehead, realized that he was not. While I stood wondering what it could be, he moaned feebly and began moving convulsively in a way that told me what it was, for I had seen many such cases during my work with the refugees in Moscow. The mother had probably given unboiled water or uncooked fruit to the child, and the convulsions of dysentery or worse were commencing.

I explained as well as I could to the poor woman that I was going for help and hurried out. When the doctor, who was a Russian, returned with me half an hour later,

he told me the case was hopeless, that it was cholerine, and that the child had, perhaps, only three or four hours more to live. The mother had probably sensed this before he had come, as she had gathered all the images of the saints she could find and had placed them around the dying child with several lighted candles in front of them and was herself standing beside the bed, sobbing loudly and praying in a wild and desperate manner.

The child died toward midnight, and the mother continued her wails until the morning, when the little funeral cortège moved away. Late in the afternoon the poor woman came back. She was sad and silent for a day or two; then, all at once, her manner changed and she became as gay as she had been before.

'God gave him to me and God took him back. There is nothing to be sorry about,' she told me afterward, when I had learned enough of the language to understand her.

I wonder if I could ever develop and live the same philosophy as this woman. I know that Dunia and all her kind possess it.

'God has taken him back to Himself' is what they say immediately after the death of one of their closest relatives, and with this their grief seems to disappear as though it had never existed.

The cholera spread quickly over all the village, with the children dying everywhere and no doctors to be seen, and with apparently no sanitary measures taken to check the epidemic. When we urged upon the peasants some sort of precaution, they only replied:

'Who has to die will die, and the doctors can't change it.'

# CHAPTER XXI

## A GREEK VILLAGE KALEIDOSCOPE

PRACTICALLY all the Russian refugees had left the Princes Islands by this time, except for the few of us who had remained behind living on our own means. Both my sisters had gone away, one to Serbia and one to Paris; but we could not yet move, as Serge convalesced very slowly and remained for a long time too weak for transfer to other surroundings. Prinkipo seemed deserted after all the refugees had been taken away, and the life on the island was calm, lazy, and sleepy under the terrible rays of the August sun.

I wonder if it was this calmness, after all the adventures we had gone through during the previous years, that reacted upon me and veiled this period of our life spent on Prinkipo with the mist that seems to enshroud it when I think back to those days — a mist through which, as I close my eyes, I see the dusty street, full of sunshine, the little white, pink, and blue houses, the half-naked, dark-skinned children, and, above all, a woman, an old woman, who was beautiful once, but whose face is marked with terrible scars. This woman ever rises before my eyes, dressed in black, the almost uniform costume of the island peasants, bent from age and sorrow, with her frightful face set with enormous dark and gleaming eyes, the only reminder of youth about her.

It was also through the baby that I made her acquaintance. One day she had come out on the hill and had brought a peach for little Alexandra as well as one

for the nurse. During the following days she came and sat down a few feet away from them and watched the baby for hours. At first Theodosia was displeased, for she did not like the woman's fixed gaze at the child and believed that she would bewitch her with 'the evil eye,' which she was sure the woman possessed. Finally she grew accustomed to her presence and, when she saw the visitor's company was not to be avoided, she herself began the conversation. Knowing as she did the Turkish language from her twenty-five years in the Caucasus, she understood everything that the old woman told her.

As the very first words the old woman pronounced, after she found there was a channel of communication between them, were 'God bless your child,' the nurse immediately forgot all her fears about evil eyes and bewitched children and made friends with the stranger. She never said a word to me, but I knew there was something going on through what I gathered from little Alexandra, who was beginning to explain matters in her own baby way. I could make out that she had seen the nurse with some sort of '*baba*,' or old woman, and also that the nurse thought that the *baba* was '*pai*,' nice. At one of these interviews the nurse was standing by and tried to maintain an expression of indifference; but, when I looked up at her, she blushed under the realization that she had disregarded my commands and made a clean breast of it all. I told her I should come out the next day and talk to the woman, which I did.

She proved to be very interesting, and I passed many hours with her there on the hillside, listening intently and living through with her all she related of her child-

hood, of her youth, of Turkish harems, and of the old Christian legends of her country.

Her name was Khriso and she was an Armenian by birth and religion, but had passed her life in the harem of a Turkish bey somewhere out in the eastern part of Asiatic Turkey. At the time we met, she had gathered together enough money to buy herself a little house and had come to Prinkipo to live.

It was late in the afternoon when I came out on the hillock and first saw Khriso sitting there by the nurse and baby. She rose at my approach and saluted me in the Greek fashion, saying: '*Kalispera*' (good-evening).

At first we sat in silence for a time. I could not speak Greek fluently and took it for granted that she knew no other language than Turkish. Suddenly the woman pointed a thin hand at something down the hill and observed: 'It is Mohammedan.'

I looked in the direction she was indicating, but could not understand what she meant.

'Who, please, is a Mohammedan?'

'The bird. Don't you know it?'

Under this guidance I noticed on the roof of a house, well down the hillside, a huge stork's nest with the bird itself standing as motionless as a statue beside it.

'Watch it, for the sun will be disappearing in a second or two, and then it will pray to the east. Look!'

The sun was just slipping below the horizon, and, with its disappearance, the stork's attitude was noticeably changing. It grew restless, turning first to one side, then to the other, and, just as the last segment of the red ball disappeared, it faced the east, uttered a sharp, cackling cry, beat demonstratively with its wings, stretched its

neck and bowed its head up and down several times. Then it stopped short and once more poised its motionless profile sedately and unconcernedly against the dark blue of the sky.

'You see now it is a Mohammedan, as I said. It prays to Allah morning and evening exactly in the same way,' came in the age-dried voice of old Khriso. 'And now, *Kalispera*, *hanoom* (madame); *Kalispera*, *koritza* (little girl). I must go.'

'Won't you remain for a while? The air is growing cooler and is so welcome after the heat we have had today.'

'*Hanoom*,' she answered, as she rose, 'though I am not a Turkish woman, I have lived all my life in a harem, and no woman of a harem is allowed to be out after sunset. I think it is a good custom and I keep to it.'

'Well, good-bye, then,' I answered, and Khriso moved off down the hill.

We saw her enter her little house, close the door, and then the shutters. She had, indeed, adopted the habit of her masters, for one seldom sees a Turkish house with open windows or doors. Even in the daytime the houses always appear to be dead or forsaken. When you go for a walk into Stamboul, away from the bazaar and the shops, you can easily imagine the town to be deserted; you will find the grass growing over the pavement, the houses closed and the windows dark. You can walk for half an hour without a sound meeting your ears or without seeing a soul.

After this first chat I did not see Khriso for some time, and several things intervened that made me forget about her.

The first of these was the Ramadan, the Mohammedan fast of several weeks which is terminated by the Bairam, one of their most important feasts, with which we made our first acquaintance at Batum. During the Ramadan the Mohammedans are forbidden to eat any kind of food or even to drink a drop of water from sunrise till midnight, though after this hour they can have as much food as they wish. One night we had gone to bed without any thought that Ramadan was close at hand and were sleeping soundly when a terrific crash and the sound of a drum under our open window made us leap up with a start. At almost the same instant the three servants with frightened faces peered into our room and asked what we thought it could be.

The street lanterns were always extinguished at eleven o'clock, and the night was so dark that we could just distinguish the outlines of two men going slowly along and making the terrible noise that had startled us, one with a huge drum about a yard in diameter and the other with cymbals. Serge, who thought it was a joke of some kind, was furious about it, especially after he had tried to draw some explanation from the absurd musicians, only to see them march solemnly around the corner of the street without deigning to answer in any way. In the discussion that followed their disappearance, Dunia was sure it was the signal for a Bolshevik rising, an idea which she always has ready to explain any extraordinary or threatened event and against which she will listen to no dissuading argument. We were finally all off to sleep again.

The following morning we tried to find out what it all meant, but our neighbors could not understand our

questions. Probably they never imagined that what was such an ordinary occurrence to them could be unfamiliar to us. The night returned as it always does. Once more we were asleep, and once more the drum and cymbals startled us at midnight. Again they passed, turned the corner, and disappeared into the darkness. This time Serge was raging, as he loved his sleep and was sure this was a silly sort of joke.

'You just wait. I shall arrange a reception for them tomorrow night which will break their step.'

I am sometimes rather nervous about Serge's jokes, and I tried to find out what he was preparing to do, but without success, for he went about the next day just as usual and did not seem to be gathering together any untoward engines of war.

When night fell again we could not sleep, and Serge remarked, just as the cathedral clock struck twelve: 'It will be a pity if they do not come after all these hours I have watched when I might have been asleep!'

As if they had only waited for these words to be pronounced, we immediately heard the sound of the drum coming nearer and nearer to the house.

'What are you going to do?' I asked my husband in some trepidation.

'Just give them a little fright,' he answered. 'Nothing serious, I assure you; but, if you want to laugh, watch the fellows!'

I came up to the window and soon realized from the approaching sound that the men would be opposite our house in a moment. Then I saw Serge reach out, and, just as the musicians passed below us, drop something on the pavement.

There followed an explosion which seemed terrific in the stillness of the night. The musicians stopped for one short second, then unburdened themselves of their drum and cymbals and shot off as fast as their legs could carry them.

'Serge, what on earth was the explosion?' I asked, after he finally stopped laughing.

'Just an old electric-light bulb for which I happened to have no better use,' he answered with a chuckle.

In the morning we looked for the drum and cymbals, but found they had disappeared. Their owners must have come back and salvaged them after the retreat, as the drumming continued for several weeks, though the men were always silent in the neighborhood of our house. We learned, though only several days afterward, that the drumming was in no way a joke, but the welcome signal to rouse the sleeping Mohammedans to the joyful news that they might eat.

We had hardly grown accustomed to the more circumspect musicians when another and more penetrating disturbance began to make hideous the nights. The season happened to be the special period for weddings among the Greek folk. Although one would naturally think that a wedding was not an affair to interfere with one's sleep, especially when one is not invited to the ceremony, this does not happen to be the case with Greek weddings. In these villages the ceremony seemed to concern everybody just as much as it did the relatives of the bride and groom.

The first one we were called upon to sustain happened to be in the house opposite ours and began one morning when I was sitting with my work at the window, from

where I could see everything. A crowd of people, decked out in their most beautiful costumes of brightest reds, blues, greens, and yellows, gathered in the street under the windows of the bridegroom's house. Finally they went off to the cathedral and half an hour later returned with the bride and bridegroom in their midst.

As the house was very small, only a few of the guests could enter, while the rest sat right down in the street in front of it and silently waited for something. Soon the bride and groom appeared and themselves passed round the elements of the feast, principally the concoction of meat, cabbage, garlic, and red pepper, sweetened by honey, which the people in Turkey love so dearly. The guests silently received the food and placed it on plates, which they had evidently brought with them from home for the occasion, as they pulled them out of their spacious pockets. As the festal wine everybody was given *mastika*, a kind of aniseed brandy, which is very strong, almost pure alcohol.

But one could see that there was something distinctly lacking to make the affair a social success and that every one seemed to be looking down the street, with the bridegroom himself in a fidgety mood and going frequently to the nearest corner, as though some other important personage were still awaited.

Then we heard a sound as of many bells, and in a second the whole company was up, chattering with excitement at the top of their voices. The bride came hurrying out of the house, and every one advanced to greet the somebody or something that was approaching. As I gazed in bated expectation I saw a man come into view, heavily laden with an enormous street-organ on his back.

The second member of the orchestra was walking behind, turning the handle of the organ and producing what I had taken to be the sound of approaching bells. The tune was a well-known one-step, 'Très Moutarde,' but it was so terribly mutilated that for a long time I could not make out what it was nor where I had heard it before.

When it arrived in front of the house, the organ was set down in the street and, from this moment on until eight o'clock the next morning, it never ceased pouring forth its flow of jingling rhythm. By this hour we were all of us nearly mad, though the Greeks apparently never tired of it, in spite of the fact that the box's repertoire was limited to exactly two tunes, the one-step which I just mentioned and a romance that is to this very day a nightmare in our household. The two men responsible for the organ's behavior ground the handle by turns; and, whenever the bridegroom observed that the conductor lagged, he would bring a glass of *mastika* and pour it himself straight down the man's throat, so that he should not be held up for a moment in his work.

With the arrival of the music the dancing began, but what a contrast to all we had ever seen or known! The men and women formed a large circle with their hands on their neighbors' shoulders and turned slowly and solemnly to the right for about half an hour, then reversed and walked round to the left, alternating this for hours. They never spoke a word, never smiled, never gave a sign of enjoyment. How could they keep going? I felt my head swim just with watching them. One step to the right, two steps to the left, and this for hours and hours, through the whole day and the whole night, silently,

solemnly, and unceasingly. I thought sometimes that I saw one of them fall asleep right in the dance. Whenever one grew tired, he would drop out of the circle, sit down on the ground for a while, refresh himself with food and drink, and then return to the dance. I felt that this rhythm must have hypnotized them, just as monotonous sounds and movements often do.

When the music, and with it the dance, finally ceased at eight o'clock on the following morning, we were probably more tired, after the sleepless night in our beds, than the dancers were. Peeping out of the window, I saw the organ being loaded upon the back of one of the men and watched it go off down the street with the other still turning the handle and with all the guests streaming along behind it as though they had been truly charmed by this Greek Pied Piper. As they disappeared, a sigh of relief escaped from all of us. Nor did we know then that we were to face eight weddings of this kind in our neighborhood within the fortnight, an accumulation of joy which left me more thoroughly exhausted than any one of our evacuation experiences.

There was one thing that everybody in the village was afraid of, and that was fire. Not once had it rained during the last four months, so that everything was as dry as tinder. Also, the houses were built in such a way that, if fire should start in one of them, not only would this burn down in a few minutes, but the whole village would probably be aflame in less than an hour's time. The houses were sided with but a single thickness of thin boards and were built so close together that you could hear every little sound of your neighbor.

One day I was lying on my bed trying to sleep after we

had endured the pleasure of another wedding, organ and all, which took place this time in the house next door, right on the side near which my bed stood, so that I had not slept a minute during this unfortunate night. While Serge had gone out on some business, I lay enjoying the calm that reigned in the village during the heat of the afternoon, when suddenly I heard shouts in the street and the oft-repeated '*Nero, nero!*' (Water, water.)

As I jumped up and looked out of the window, what I saw affected me like a strong electric current. Though I knew I had to be calm, I felt my knees shake in a rather silly way. Out of the windows and the door of the house next to ours came columns of smoke and the terrified shrieks of women and children. I ran into the hall and cried to the astonished Dunia and the cook:

'Pack everything you can and get out. The next house is on fire.'

Then, taking the baby up and pushing the terrified nurse before me, I opened the entrance door and ordered her to go off to the hillside. It seemed certain that in another ten minutes our own house would be burning, so that we had to do whatever we could in this short time to save our belongings. We threw things feverishly into blankets and carried these out into the garden. I could see the people in the street, shouting and weeping, and no help in sight, not even a drop of water, as the wells were empty at this hour and the sea was too far away.

An instant later I realized that the shouting had suddenly ceased and, looking out, I saw the crowd gazing spellbound toward the roof of the burning house. Then, through the silence, came Serge's voice: 'Idiots that you are!'

I stopped packing immediately and ran out into the street; and there he was, my good husband, standing on the roof of the house and just in the act of covering the blazing chimney with an enormous wet blanket. When he had done this, he sat on the blanket and began to explain to the transfixed crowd, in a bad mixture of Greek and Russian, that this was the best way to stop a fire in a chimney!

Following this successful demonstration, everybody in the village was exceptionally deferential toward him. Whenever he went on the street, all who passed would bow very low and touch their hands several times to forehead and heart.

It was just after this that I saw old Khriso again and told her about the terrible fright we had had.

'Have you been in Stamboul?' she inquired.

'Yes, indeed. Why do you ask?'

'Did you see the place burned by the big fire during the war?'

'Yes, I saw it and often wondered why it had been left untouched, as well as that other big section burned in the midst of Pera. Why have they not begun to rebuild these?'

'They won't rebuild them — in Stamboul, at least, though I do not know about Pera.'

'But why not? The ruins are so ugly.'

'Because the Turks have a superstition about burned houses, which holds that it is Allah's curse on the place that causes the fire.'

I verified this later and observed that, during the eighteen months we were in or near Constantinople, not one of the burned houses in Stamboul was rebuilt. Also I can

appreciate now why the people there believe it is the curse of Allah that sends the fire, for the houses are all light wooden buildings and so closely set that fire runs through them as greedily as a blaze sweeps the prairie.

## CHAPTER XXII

### KHRISO, THE ARMENIAN MAID

AFTER the Ramadan and the weddings I met Khriso frequently, but never could quite accustom myself to the sight of her awful face. I felt that she noticed my want of ease in her presence and was confirmed in this one day when she asked:

'You wonder about my face, *hanoom?* I was too beautiful in my youth,' she went on with pride. 'I don't mind telling my story to you, as it happened many years ago and I have had a happy life since then. I am not a Greek, as you probably thought, but an Armenian and was born in a little village far away in Asiatic Turkey. When I was very young, a child of seven or eight, the Turks raided our village and burned it to the ground, killed everybody except the young girls and several children, and carried us away. We trudged on for a long time, half naked and starving, until finally we came to a town where all of us were sold into different harems.

'I was bought by a man who at once took me away to his home, where, besides his recently wedded wife, his mother and two sisters were living. The old *hanoom* ruled the place in such a way that no one ever dared disobey her. The moment she saw me, she took pity upon me and from that very first day she was a second mother to me.

'In those earlier times the harem women were most strictly secluded, and no one was ever allowed outside the house without the *chadra* (veil). Only we who were serv-

ants could go on foot in the streets. We had, however, a big garden to ourselves, which was surrounded with a high stone wall that prevented people from seeing us from without.'

'Can you explain to me,' I interrupted, 'why the Turkish women of the present day wear their peculiar headcovering when their dresses are often of the regular European pattern and their faces are no longer veiled? Why do they not adopt ordinary hats?'

'Oh, this will certainly be the last to come,' answered Khriso, 'as it is mentioned in the Koran or somewhere in the Mohammedan law that a woman must never let a strange man see the back of her neck or her hair.

'Well,' continued Khriso, 'as I told you I had frequent opportunities to go about, for the *hanoom* would send me to buy various things for them, ribbons, sweets, and the like.

'It was during one of these errands, when I was a girl of fourteen, that I met a man riding a beautiful horse with two mounted servants following him. He was not very young, perhaps around forty, and I saw from the manner in which everybody bowed to him and stared after him that he was some prominent bey or perhaps even a pasha. Probably I was so much impressed by it all and so taken up with staring that I did not step aside quickly enough and, as the street was narrow and crowded, I was ridden down by one of his servants. Before I was conscious of what had happened, I felt a pain in my shoulders and fell to the pavement, screaming loudly. My *chadra* was pulled aside, so that everybody could see my face.

'The bey stopped and looked so intently at me that I ceased crying, hurriedly arranged my veil, scrambled to

my feet, and fled. When I arrived breathless at our gate, I turned back and saw one of the bey's servants standing at the corner of the street watching me. I was terrified, for it meant severe punishment, disgrace through all my life, if it became known I had been followed by a man in the street; and consequently I never said a word about it.

'But during succeeding days, when I went out on my errands, I passed the bey several times. Whenever we met, he would stop his horse and look intently into my eyes, though he never addressed a single word to me. I thought he did not recognize me the first two times he passed, but then I saw he knew me perfectly well, though my eyes, the only part of my face he could see, were as black as those of the Turkish women around me.

'Not long after this our master one day announced in the household that X—— Bey had asked the hand of his sister in marriage, a fact of which our master was deeply proud, as the bey was a man of high birth and large fortune.

'The preparations for the wedding were going speedily forward, for the bey wished it so. His fiancée, a girl only two years older than myself, was greatly pleased and very proud of him. They had never met and would not see each other until after the marriage ceremony; but our master always warned us when he expected his future brother-in-law to visit him in the men's part of the house, and all the women in the harem would stand for hours at the grilled windows to have a look at the bey as he came and went. No one could see us, but we saw everything perfectly well. Also he sent numerous gifts to his fiancée and to all the women in the harem. Once I was startled when I received a gold bracelet set with a beautiful tur-

quoise. On seeing this present, the old *hanoom* remarked to her daughter: 'You are fortunate, my child, for your future husband is generous. If he sends such jewelry to little Khriso now, think what you will receive when you become his wife!'

'None of them knew the real meaning of this present; only I had many misgivings and an uncomfortable feeling about it, as I had recognized in the fiancée of my young mistress the bey who had looked at me and had had me followed in the streets.

'The day of the wedding came, and all the men went off to the mosque while we were dressing the bride and preparing the wedding feast. When they returned and the bridegroom came to greet his mother-in-law and his bride, whom he could now properly see after having become a member of the family, he looked at me in such a piercing way that I put my arm over my unveiled face and ran down to the kitchen. A strange feeling of fright took possession of me and never left me, but only increased with each additional meeting in the household.

'He never said a word to me until one evening when I met him in the hall. The door to the brightly lighted living-room was ajar, and all the family were having coffee there. I had gone out to bring another cup and, as I was passing a dark corner in the long corridor, I felt some one grasp my shoulders and whisper commandingly in my ear: "I want you to be my wife. I shall arrange for my servants to take you away at once to my harem in one of my country places, so that no one shall know what has become of you until the household stop thinking about you and have ceased to care."

'I was so terrified that I let the cup drop from my hands

and, tearing myself out of his grasp, fled to the old *hanoom*, who was already in bed and asleep. There I regained my control and made up my mind that I should not for anything in the world say a word about the matter to anybody. I was afraid of the man, afraid of his cruel eyes, his voice and his manner, and never would I willingly be his wife. I hated him. As the old *hanoom* was wakened by my weeping, I began begging her not to let me be taken away, but to allow me to live with her to the end of my days.

'"But, Khriso, who on earth told you that I would let you go anywhere? You know as well as I do that we bought you and that you belong to us."

'"*Hanoom*," I said, feeling I had to influence her, "I say this to you because our master and the bey plan to make me go as servant to the young *hanoom*, when she leaves with her husband for her new home, and I cannot bear the idea of parting with you, who have been as a mother to me since I came into your house."

'"Who told you this?"

'"I was standing in the hall and heard what they said in the living-room.'

'"You have been listening at the door again! You know how I dislike this."

'I blushed, as everything I had told her was a lie; but I had to do it, and was silent. Yet this proved to be a sort of prophecy, for the next morning our master came to his mother and told her that the bey asked him to send me as servant to his wife when she goes to her new home. I was startled when I heard this, but they had reckoned without the old *hanoom*, for she flatly refused to part with me and sent another girl from the harem in my place.

'I tried to avoid the bey as much as I could, but it was difficult, as he was always about the house. When he saw me walking in the garden on the day they were to leave, he came down and stopped right in front of me, murmuring something which I could not understand. To my life's end I shall never forget the expression of passion, hatred, and evil which I saw in his eyes and under which I felt myself grow cold and faint. Though it seemed to me an age, it was probably only a second before he turned, went up the steps, and disappeared into the house without another glance at me. I crept behind a bush and lay there motionless for hours until I heard them go.

'Then only did I reënter the house and from this time on I felt something strange, some unseen presence, or perhaps only a disturbing foreboding, that made me afraid to remain alone, to go out into the street, or even to walk in the garden. After six months my fears grew less, for I was young, gay, and beautiful and naturally could not live on forever with this one idea in my head.

'One day the old *hanoom* fell ill, and I was sent out to bring the woman who usually acted as doctor to us. It was the first time I had gone alone into the street, for I had, during these months, persistently refused to venture out by myself and had greatly astonished all the household by my obstinacy and fear. It was winter and the dusk was falling, but I hurried along with the single idea of finding the woman as quickly as possible. I caught her at home and received her promise to come at once, after which she ordered me to hurry back and light the stove so as to have hot water and everything ready when she came.

'I started off at a run, even though I knew that I had a

long way to go. The streets were deserted and, though I was no coward, I suddenly felt frightened and tried to move as quickly as possible. Then I definitely began to feel a presence haunting me. I knew somebody was behind me, but, turning my head, I could see nothing, as darkness had already fallen. A few seconds later I heard some one running behind me, coming closer and closer all the time. These minutes of fearful expectation, this feeling of approaching danger and of mad panic, this sense of haunting loneliness in the sleeping town was the worst of all that happened that night.

'When the men — I knew by then that there were two of them — came fairly close to me, I began screaming wildly for help, but nobody came; the windows remained dark, the gates did not open, and I was left alone to my fate in the middle of the town, where thousands of people sat calmly within doors quite close to me.

'Somebody grabbed me by the arm, and I stopped, for my feeling of helplessness against these two men was absolute. I could not do anything and felt it was better to submit, once they had caught me. One of them held my hands behind my back, while the other snatched my *chadra* off. For a second he looked at me and then lifted his arm.

'"Too pretty you are, my girl," was the last I heard, as I fainted. I think, though I am not sure, that I saw something glitter in his hand.

'It must have been some time before I recovered consciousness. I felt pains all over my face. With difficulty I rose and only then put a hand to my cheek, finding there was blood on it — and then on the other also.

My first thought was that I had fallen down and hurt myself. Then I felt for my jewels and found they were gone. I began looking round for my *chadra*, and, after stumbling for a long time in the dark, recovered it and put it on as well as I could. The pain was not so bad but what I could walk home rather rapidly without much distress. When the master opened the door at my knock and saw me lift my veil, he grew pale and almost screamed at me: "Khriso! Whatever has happened to you?"

'Then he took me by the arm, led me into the circle of light beneath the lamp, and stared at me with a look of horror.

'"I was assailed by two robbers, fainted and fell; and probably my face struck against some stone," I answered apologetically.

'He looked at me again for a moment with the same expression on his face, then took me into the living-room, where a small, inferior looking-glass was hanging on the wall. His wife and sister shrieked when they caught sight of me, and a second later I understood why they had all been so horrified when they saw me. My face was slashed with a knife in different directions, and the blood was running out of the long wounds which crossed and re-crossed my cheeks and forehead. "Too pretty you are, my girl" — I heard the words of the criminal once more, and, just for an instant, I thought I could see the bey's face grinning evilly out of the darkness.

'Then I lost all consciousness of life and time, and I believe I was mad for several weeks or months — at any rate I never knew. When I came back to a consciousness of life again, it was once more winter, and the wounds upon my face seemed to have healed long ago, leaving

only the great, ugly, red scars. I did not dare ask anything, and no one ever said a word to me about the whole affair. Eastern people have an unusual bearing toward, and a sort of respect for, insane persons, in consequence of which no one ever spoke to me about my misfortune. I gradually accustomed myself to look without shrinking upon the horrid face which I saw in my mirror. I was seventeen only, yet I felt myself to be an old woman and was looked upon as such by every one.

'About a year later the bey and his wife came to visit us. The young *hanoom* never ceased pitying me; the bey did not say a word, but just smiled. In the evening, when I was alone in the kitchen preparing the coffee, he came in, closed the door, and called me.

'"Khriso!"

'"Yes," I answered. All the fear I had had of the man was gone.

'"You did not want to be my wife; you won't be any one else's now!" and the look of hatred came back into his eyes.

'"So it was you who did it!" I said, turning and looking straight into his face.

'We stared for a moment at each other; then he turned and slipped silently out of the room. The next day he left on some business pretext and sent his servants to escort his wife home a month later.

'For about ten years after this he never came to our house, leaving her to visit us alone.

'"He is too busy," was the excuse she would give every time.

'Then he finally appeared, but what an old man he had become! He never dared to look into my eyes, and I felt

that he was frightened of what I might say and utterly humiliated by this fear.

'And this was my revenge!' Khriso added, her eyes burning with a fire that told me it had been a gratifying Nemesis upon the man she hated and would hate until the hour of her death.

We were silent for a moment, during which she looked at me with searching interest and a question in her great black eyes.

'It is terrible,' I finally said. 'And what is almost more disheartening is that I feel, from your attitude toward this tragic story, you think it natural for a man to act in this way.'

'I'll tell you more,' the old woman quickly answered. 'I have even been proud of it, for this was real love and I had won it without any effort on my part. You European women, you have quite a different attitude toward such matters. You do not demand the supreme expression; you are quite happy with the ordinary, everyday life and mood. But perhaps if you had led the shut-in existence of the harem — I speak of the real harem life of half a century ago — you would think otherwise. There are so many things which would seem wild to you, though they are but natural to us who live among them from our very childhood.'

She was probably right, old Khriso; but — oh, how terrible!

# CHAPTER XXIII

## OUT ACROSS THE MARMORA SEA

AUTUMN was coming fast. The weather began to grow so cool and the winds blew so fresh across the sea that we felt our little cottage might prove far from tenable during the coming months.

I went several times to Constantinople in search of quarters, but could find nothing. There are no proper agencies in town, and, what was still worse, if some one told you of a house for rent, you might be reasonably sure that you never could find it, owing to the entire lack of any proper system of street names and numbers. You had no option but to search about in the section where the house was said to be located and inquire for it from every casual passer-by.

Nor did we ever see a proper plan of Constantinople. After we had passed the first month in town, we formed the habit of drawing a diagram of the route to our door-step whenever we invited people to visit us, starting with some well-known street, like Pera, and then developing the trail through the maze of smaller byways to our door.

At last, after much inquiring, I thought I had found a place and went with Serge to look at it. It was a fine large house in the center of Stamboul, just above the burned section and commanding a splendid view of the Bosphorus. We could have the whole house to ourselves and, wonder of wonders in these surroundings, a real bathroom in the bargain! All the other places we had

seen previous to this had not even a water supply and were dependent upon the wells in the neighboring streets.

I must say a word about this particular bathroom, for it was worthy of record. It was all paved and tiled with white stone blocks, and there were even benches of the same material against the walls. Our agent explained that the water was warmed by a heater in the cellar with a system of piping that not only raised the water to the proper temperature, but the floor and benches as well.

The bath itself was square, small, and so abnormally high that one could not hope to get into it without climbing on a chair and vaulting over the brim. The water would have probably come up to my chin if I stood up in it, and I am by no means a Lilliputian. Serge maintained that it would furnish him with much desirable morning gymnastics to jump in and out of it several times before bathing and immediately gave quite a successful demonstration. I did not take so kindly to the gymnastics idea as he did; but still there was a bath, and this was a great thing. Then we went to look at the rooms, six of them.

'The dining-room,' announced the agent, as we entered a large room with a beautiful carpet covering the floor and an array of big soft cushions along the walls, but not a vestige of a table or a chair in sight.

'The salon,' he continued, ushering us into the next one, where we also saw a splendid carpet and heaps of cushions, this time scattered all over the floor in picturesque disorder.

The bedrooms presented exactly the same appearance, except for the fact that the cushions were a bit larger and not so clean. There was not one bed or chair in the place,

cushions and carpets making up the whole supply of furniture. When I remarked the fact to our guide, who was himself a Greek, he shrugged his shoulders and answered disdainfully: 'It is a Turkish house, and they are all like this.'

On learning from him that we could hire furniture, we were on the point of closing the contract, as I liked the place very much, when I told him I wished the carpets removed from all the bedrooms and those in the dining-room and salon taken up and thoroughly cleaned.

'We never could do this, madame, as they are glued to the floor to prevent any cold or draught coming up through them!'

Serge and I looked at each other and made an effort to keep serious.

'I shall write to you to-morrow,' I said to the agent with my most amiable smile, thinking the while what an awful accumulation of dirt there must have been in those carpets.

We felt rather disappointed as we journeyed back to Prinkipo, for it was now the beginning of October, and we had spent a fruitless month in searching for some quarters on the mainland.

Some days later the weather moderated so perceptibly that we did not mind remaining longer in our little house. This delay was a matter of unfeigned pleasure for at least one individual in our small group, and that was Khriso.

'I love you Russians,' she once said to me. 'We always look upon you as our future rescuers from the Mohammedans, especially after the discovery of Christ's Cross.'

'What do you mean?' I asked.

'Don't you know about it? Some people declare it is only a legend, but most of us believe it is entirely true and are only waiting for the day of our delivery and for the mosque of Sancta Sophia to become once more a Christian cathedral. My mother told me the story when I was but a baby.

'Many years ago one of your Grand Dukes, Constantine by name, came to pay a visit to the Sultan. He was received with great pomp and honor, and beautiful gifts were presented to him. Lavish feasts were arranged, and hundreds of the finest men and women in the land were set to wait upon him, yet he never smiled and looked upon everything with such sadness in his eyes that the Sultan remarked it and asked: "What has happened to you? Why do you not enjoy it all? I have done my best to please you."

'The Grand Duke was silent for a moment and then answered: "I cannot tell you what is the matter with me, as I do not know myself; but the time may come when I shall know, and then I shall tell you.'

'As the visit wore on, the royal guest grew ever thinner and paler, until everybody was greatly worried about him.

'Then, when the morning of his departure came, he suddenly arose in a different mood and ordered his horse and suite to be ready at once to go to the Sultan's palace. Life had come back to him, and he looked as if a brilliant vision stood ever before his eyes. He galloped all the way and entered immediately the reception-room where the Sultan was awaiting him.

'"I have come to ask your Majesty for a present," were the first words he spoke.

'"Everything in the land is yours while you are my guest. Only tell me your desire, and I shall have it fulfilled."

'"It is a wooden cross which is buried in the earth behind the mosque of Sancta Sophia and about which I dreamed last night."

'"Oh, if it is only that," said the Sultan, and immediately despatched his servants to the spot the Grand Duke indicated.

'The cross was brought, and the Grand Duke, after taking leave of his host, hurried with his treasure on board his ship, which at once set sail for Russia.

'An hour had not passed before an old and famous dervish appeared at the palace and asked to see the Sultan at once.

'"Tell him there is a great danger threatening his land," he said.

'The Sultan gave orders to admit the man immediately.

'"What hast thou done, O Padishah?" the dervish began. "Thou hast given away the talisman of thy realm in presenting this cross to thy guest. We dervishes knew about the cross and kept the secret, as Fortune dwells in the land that holds it. It is the cross on which a Saint and a Just Man came to His death. Lose not a moment, but send thy fleetest ships to pursue the Russians and bring the sacred treasure back!"

'The Sultan immediately despatched several ships-of-war to overhaul the Russian craft; but, as they were approaching it, the Russians lifted up the cross, and from it came such a dazzling light that many in the crews of the Turkish ships became blind, and the whole fleet

turned back in terror to the Turkish coast. Some weeks later, war was declared between Turkey and Russia, for the Sultan sought to regain possession of the cross; but fortune was so completely with the Russians that the Turks were beaten and had to accept all the conditions imposed by the victors.

'From that time on Turkey began to wane. She has been strong and terrible, but she is dying now. And we are all waiting for you Russians to come and conquer the land and set up the Holy Cross once more in the cathedral of Sancta Sophia and give it back to the Christians again. I feel now that I shall be gone before it happens. We were waiting for it during the Great War and oh, how disappointed we were at the news of your Revolution! But, believe me, the Cross is still in Russia; it has been buried in a safe place, and only a few people know about it — but the time will come . . . !'

As I looked out from that little hill on Prinkipo across the great blue stretches of the Marmora Sea, I heard these words of Khriso repeating themselves over and over, 'But the time will come . . . the time will come . . .' And I rose, with tears in my eyes and too choked to phrase more than a word of parting, looked from the slashed cheeks and great black eyes of Khriso into the laughing, carefree face of my baby, and turned to go down the hill to Serge, wondering whether we should soon help to bring other Christians home or whether we too were ourselves but starting down the long road of exile which the Armenian woman had trod.

# EPILOGUE

HERE this woman of so many vicissitudes, crises, and dangers chooses to end her story, leaving it to the reader to supply from the too well-known history of to-day the ordinary facts in the life of Russian refugees in foreign lands.

It seems to me no breach of her sense of the drama's proprieties for me to add a word to let the reader know that she has not continued in the dreamy mood in which she goes off down that sun-baked hill in Prinkipo, but that she has set to work with her husband in their new surroundings in France to build again from the ground up, he as a creative artisan at his carpenter's bench — which has now grown into an electrically driven combination machine to do his bidding more rapidly than the wooden planes and square-framed saws could do — and she successively as masseuse, seamstress, and *ouvroir* organizer, as well as director and guide of a household which continues to shelter Dunia and Theodosia, the prose and poesy of that Russian life to which their mistress is helping to contribute a fresh impulse of strength and courage under what a decade ago would have been for her an unimaginable reversal of fortune.

THE END

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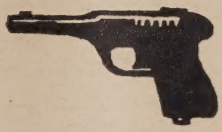
# THE WHITE DEVIL'S MATE



By Lewis Stanton

PALEN

Author of

THE WHITE DEVIL OF THE BLACK SEA